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SPEECHES

ON

ARLIAMENTARY REFORM

In 1866.

By THE RIGHT HON. W. E. GLADSTONE,

M.P. FOR SOUTH LANCASHIRE.

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WITH AN APPENDIX.

Vouchsafe
Of these supposed evils to give me leave
By circumstance but to acquit myself.
—K. Rich. III., act i., sc. 2.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.
1866.

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LONDON: PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET,
AND CHARING CROSS.

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PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE BILL.

INTRODUCTION OF THE BILL.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: I have now, Sir, to ask that those Paragraphs of THE QUEEN'S SPEECH, which relate to the electoral franchise, may be read at the table.

Paragraphs in Queen's Speech at the opening of the Session read, as follows:—

"*I have directed that information should be procured in reference to the Rights of Voting in the Election of Members to serve in Parliament for Counties, Cities, and Boroughs.*

"*When that information is complete, the attention of Parliament will be called to the result thus obtained, with a view to such improvements in the Laws which regulate the Rights of Voting in the Election of Members of the House of Commons as may tend to strengthen our Free Institutions and conduce to the Public Welfare.*"

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER again rose and said—Mr. Deputy Speaker: Sir, if in order to estimate justly the arduous character of the question which I have now to bring before you, it be right, as I suppose, to take into view not only its own extent and

complexity, and not only the strange fluctuation of circumstances which has attended and marked its history, but also the weakness of the hands into which the treatment of it has fallen, then, perhaps, I may well say that few Ministers have risen in recent years to address this House under greater difficulties than those, which at this moment attend my own position and my present task.

Sir, those difficulties are, I am conscious, of such a kind as to affect in the first instance Her Majesty's Government; and we are perfectly sensible of the weight of responsibility which attaches to us. But although they be concentrated in their greatest weight upon us, yet they are not ours alone. The interest in the successful solution of this question is an interest common to the whole House of Commons; to every party, and to every section of a party, that sits within these walls. For, Sir, let me remind you that those Paragraphs, which we have just heard read, are not the only Paragraphs in which, under the most solemn form known to the Constitution, the subject of the Representation of the People has been brought under the notice of Parliament. By no less than five Administrations, and in no less than six Speeches of the Queen anterior to that of the present year, the House of Commons has been acquainted by the Sovereign, under the advice of her constitutionally appointed Ministers, that the time, in their judgment, had arrived when the Representation of the People ought to undergo revision. It is needless to refer to the terms of those Speeches severally; but it will at once be recollected that they have not been delivered exclusively at periods when Ministers taken from this side of the House were in power. In 1859,

and in 1860, as well as in other years, and by both parties, each in its turn, those solemn pledges have been given in the face of the country.

And, Sir, having much, I fear, to state to the House, I shall not, under the circumstances I have stated, unnecessarily occupy its time on this occasion by discussing the general grounds of the question, whether there ought to be a revision of our electoral system, and whether the franchises of the people ought to be extended. With such an accumulation of authority, and of authority proceeding from every quarter, in my favour, I hold it to be superfluous, for the moment, to debate that general question. I shall assume that by these declarations, so repeatedly and so solemnly made, the general ground and justification have been sufficiently, nay, amply supplied, on which Her Majesty's present Government are warranted in placing before you a proposal relating to this important subject. And I venture, Sir, to request from the House not only for myself that kind patience and indulgence which I have, times innumerable, received at its hands, but likewise, what is more material, for the question which I have to introduce, that grave and earnest attention which belongs to a matter undoubtedly of a serious order.

Sir, it may be with great truth said, with respect to the origin of this question, that it is emphatically the work of the House of Commons itself. Let me remind the House, as the period has now long gone by, and as many of the Gentlemen whom I address have recently taken their seats on these Benches for the first time—let me remind the House of what happened in the beginning of the year 1851. And I must say that the event, which then occurred, was of a nature to saddle

the responsibility connected with the introduction of this question, in a high and peculiar sense, not merely on one or on another Minister or Government, but upon the whole body of the House of Commons. It was an independent Member—my hon. Friend the Member for East Surrey (Mr. Locke King)—who, on the 20th of February, 1851, moved for leave to bring in a Bill to grant a 10*l.* occupation franchise in counties. In the debate which followed, the sole opponent of that Motion was my noble Friend now at the head of the Government. Every other authority in the House either approved, or was silent on the occasion. Although, in resisting the Motion, the noble Earl, then first Minister, promised that the Government would itself take the question into its consideration, and would in the following Session make a proposal for amending the representation of the people, yet this did not at the time satisfy the House, and the Government were beaten by a majority of forty-eight. The minority consisted of fifty-two Members; and among those fifty-two there were not, I think, more than twelve or fifteen persons who sat on the Benches of the party opposite. So that it cannot, I think, be denied that the first initiation of this subject in the form in which it now comes before us—having begun as a question of the county franchise only, but it having been perfectly well known that a change in that portion of our system must draw a change in the borough franchise along with it—the initiation of this subject, I say, was in a peculiar sense the work of the House of Commons. And, therefore, in inviting you to co-operate with us, the advisers of the Crown, in our endeavour to bring it to a solution, we are inviting you not only to relieve us of difficulties, but to effect a

work in which Parliament itself has had, from the first, a common interest with ourselves.

Sir, the election of a new Parliament in 1865 naturally led the Government to feel, that the time had arrived when it was right that the sense of the representatives of the people should again be taken in regard to the laws which regulate our electoral system. The duty of the Government in this respect was a very plain one. No doubt, they had before them the discouraging record of former failures. No doubt, they had to deal, as it was obvious, with a state of the public mind that was not clear, definite, and resolute, but rather one bewildered, or, at the least, indecisive. Their duty, however, was, as I have said, plain. It was at once to examine the whole materials within their reach which could throw real light upon the case; to cast aside every consideration narrower than those which belonged to a great public and national interest; not to inquire for one moment what might be for the benefit or for the convenience of this party or of that; to be more studious of the substance, than of the shadow or the name, of their own consistency; to apply their minds and the best powers they possessed to the construction of a prudent, but an effectual measure; and then to await the issue at the hands of Parliament; but, as far as depended upon them, having once framed their measure, to sustain and support it with all the energy and decision they could command.

And, Sir, the first question which we had to consider was a most important one. It was whether we were to attempt legislation in the present Session, or whether we were to be content for the time with inquiry. It was beyond all dispute that the careful examination of

the facts of the case lay at the very threshold of the subject. It was the want of information, or at any rate the want of definite and authentic information, which had furnished the greatest opening for contention during the debates of the year 1860. It was scarcely possible, in that year, to get at the point really in issue. Such were the doubts, such were the misgivings, such was the scepticism in regard to the figures on the one side and on the other, that we felt that if we were really to come to issue on the merits of the case, we must endeavour to make ourselves, and to make Parliament as well as ourselves, masters of the material facts appertaining to it. Well, Sir, with no delay—I believe in the first autumn Cabinet, which was held after the funeral of our lamented chief, and certainly before approaching any other domestic question of a public character—we applied ourselves to consider and frame the heads under which that information was to be obtained. As soon as those heads could be framed, the necessary measures were taken for procuring it; and I am bound to say that the assistance we have received from the Poor Law Department, and in particular the labours of Mr. Lambert, who has been the person principally concerned, proved to be, in point of ability and of assiduity, everything that we could desire. Indeed, I am persuaded that if Members, whether they sit on this side or on that, have been able, since Saturday morning last, to institute any examination of the volume of Returns which has been laid on the table, they will admit that in the preparation of that volume the time has not been misspent; and they will likewise admit that they have now the advantage of approaching the consideration of this important question with such a range of knowledge,

with such a mass of authentic and weighty facts, as have never been collected before.

We, therefore, Sir, can truly say that no time has been wasted. Had we, however, found that it was not feasible, by the means at the command of the Executive Government, to obtain information which should be both full in its scope and range, and authentic and trustworthy in its character, we should have had no hesitation in at once seeking the aid of Parliament, and in postponing legislation until such information had been obtained. But when we saw what could be done, and when, as the materials began to flow in upon our hands during the winter months, we perceived what had been done, we had no doubt whatever as to the practicability of satisfying both the branches of the Legislature with regard to the sufficiency of their knowledge; and, therefore, we had not the least hesitation in at once pledging ourselves, as early as the commencement of the Session, to the introduction of a measure on this subject.

And here, Sir, I am anxious to make an explanation in reference to the preparation of the electoral statistics now in the hands of the Members of this House. There have been, here and there, not unnatural indications of a disposition to murmur at the supposed delay in the production of these Papers, and to ascribe such delay to hesitation and vacillation of purpose on the part of the Government. Undoubtedly that has not been the case. So anxious have we been to give promptly to the House of Commons, as far as we could, the same means of judging with ourselves, that I can truly state that on Friday evening I could not obtain for my own use a completely finished copy of those Papers, other than the

copy that was laid by me on the table of the House of Commons, and that, consequently, when so laid, had passed out of my controul.

But the question of time has an importance very different from that which it derives from its connection with vague rumours or vague insinuations. It has this importance—it is now the 12th of March when I make to you the first proposal for the introduction of a Bill; and, taking into consideration the approach of the Easter recess, it will not be possible for us to ask you to read the Bill a second time till the second week in April. As prudent and practical men, therefore, we have had to measure what our powers might be with regard to legislation in the present Session. Then, of course, arose the question for consideration—Are we to have what is termed a complete measure, or are we to have one that is incomplete? Now, I would ask Members of the House to consider what is meant by a complete revision of our representative system. I must, indeed, omit from any definition or explanation I may offer of the phrase some branches of legislation, which are or have been favourites with a portion of the Members of the House, and which we, as a Government, do not admit to be necessary or desirable for us to take into consideration. I need not, therefore, refer to such questions as the question of secret voting, or the question of shortening Parliaments, which I cannot give any undertaking to view with favour either now or at a future time; but I refer to what would more generally be admitted to belong to a complete revision of our representative system; because we—like every one else—are sensible of the immense advantage which would attend an operation, whereby you would be able to deal with the whole range of the question at once.

In the first place, then, there must be a consideration of the franchise in England and Wales, and a like consideration in Scotland, where it is, perhaps, even more obviously, I might say more urgently, required. The subject of the Irish franchise, too, must be considered; although that is in a simpler state, because the electoral arrangements in that island have been more recently adjusted by Parliament, and the machinery necessary for such purposes is much more perfect than in this country. Then comes the whole group of questions that are included in the common phrase "redistribution of seats" —questions between the three Kingdoms—questions between town and country—questions between total extinction, or capital punishment, such as is inflicted in Schedule A, and the milder method of amputation, such as is administered in Schedule B, or that yet milder method of grouping small boroughs together, adopted in principle by my noble Friend now at the head of Her Majesty's Government in his Bill of 1852, but susceptible of being applied in many and very different forms. All these are matters that must undergo careful consideration by Parliament, and must, almost of necessity, entail protracted discussion. Then comes another question, which, in reviewing our electoral system, can never be avoided; namely, the question whether the present boundaries of boroughs are such as the circumstances of those boroughs naturally demand. To meddle with the boundaries of boroughs for the sake of affecting questions of town and country representation, and a supposed balance of interests, would, in my opinion, be a gross abuse. But, on the other hand, to inquire what may justly be called the natural boundaries of each borough, as determined by public convenience from time to time,

is not only a legitimate and useful, but it is an essential part of any complete review of our electoral laws.

I am sorry to say that there is another matter belonging to that review, which I do not believe to be less urgent at the present time than at any other, and that is the consideration of the state of the law with respect to corrupt practices at elections. I cannot hazard prophecies on that subject, which is as difficult as it is important. But I am afraid the urgency of it now, as compared with former times, is in no degree diminished; and, undoubtedly, it could not be passed over by any Government in taking a complete survey of the electoral system. Lastly comes a question of great practical importance, though no doubt of a less arduous character, concerning the administrative machinery for registration, and for the holding of elections. These subjects, Sir, are complex in themselves; but they have been further complicated by the speculations of many men of great ability and great authority, who have thought that, taking into account on the one side the demand for the extension of the franchise, and, on the other side, the difficulties we have to encounter with respect to the due or undue distribution of power among the different classes of the community, the time had come for introducing in one form or another propositions to which they attach great importance. One or other of them, nay several of them, may be supported by arguments the most ingenious, and by authorities the most weighty; but yet they are propositions, of almost all of which it may be emphatically said, that they are in the old English sense innovations, and which, as being innovations, never could come under the criticism of this House without the expenditure of much time in a careful, a

searching, and a jealous examination. Now, was it possible for us to suppose that, as we now stand in respect to time, it would be in the power of Parliament to accomplish the complete review, that I have endeavoured to describe, during the present Session? It is all very good, very conformable to the habits of this country, and in itself a very constitutional habit of mind, to entertain the idea of what we call the omnipotence of Parliament. But time and space are not yet annihilated, either for the purpose, as the dramatist has it, of making lovers happy, or for any other purpose. I, therefore, want to know what is the time at our command in the position in which we stand, and what is, on the other hand, the time probably requisite to enable Parliament to deal in a deliberate and effectual manner with this group of subjects? Neither of these questions is very difficult to answer. As regards the time at our command, as far as I can at present judge, if we obtain leave from the House for the introduction of this Bill, we shall propose that the second reading take place on the 12th of April. Suppose, then, I measure the time between the 12th of April and the middle of July, which I think will be the latest period at which such a Bill can, under ordinary circumstances, be sent to the House of Lords, I find that the evenings certainly at the disposal of the Government would amount to about twenty-four. One-half of these might, as we must calculate, probably be occupied by the financial arrangements of the Session, and by the business of Supply. Beyond a period, then, which might not much exceed twelve evenings, we shall have nothing whatever to depend upon but the charity of private Members, and the crumbs that may fall from their table. What have we found on similar occasions

in former years? In 1860 we spent about ten nights, in trying, I may say, to do nothing. The great example of the Reform Act may give us some idea of the time occupied by complete reviews of our electoral system. A single one of the three Bills, out of which the Reform Act finally grew, occupied fifty nights of the time of the House of Commons. But I feel that I should understate the case if I were to say that 100 nights, at least, were expended in that complete review of the electoral system, which was achieved in the year 1831-2. It may be said, and said very truly, that at that time there was a political heat and excitement, and a degree of apprehension, which do not now exist; and I do not suppose that any such review as I have indicated would at the present day require so great a time. But, then, let me point out that the time occupied in passing that Act, and the subsequent Acts, was not less than some six or eight times in extent that which is now, even at a sanguine estimate, at our certain command. On the occasion to which I have referred, Parliament did indeed achieve a complete review of our electoral system; but, in order to do so, it turned day into night, and summer into winter. You called upon every member of every class to sacrifice all his domestic engagements, you made the seasons of the year give way to your resistless and determined will, and you justly sacrificed, nay, you were compelled to sacrifice, all other legislation, I may say, of a nature to require serious discussion, for a period of two years.

These are not the circumstances in which we now stand. We may reckon, I have no doubt, upon very fair and reasonable treatment with respect to the progress of a measure of this kind. Do not let it be supposed that

I now reckon on our encountering what is called obstruction. We may gather, I think, what we ought to anticipate from a few words in a speech delivered by the right hon. Gentleman opposite (Mr. Disraeli) in 1860. He said—

"He and his friends desired, in short, not delay, but that deep and deliberate investigation of a great subject which was in accordance with the freedom of discussion by which the Parliament of England was characterised." The right hon. Gentleman was justified in calling for such an investigation; and for us to attempt now to overlook or pass by such a call would be a breach of duty on our part. And experience teaches us what this sort of investigation means. We have determined, therefore, that it was quite impossible for us to do more than, in approaching this question, to look first at what we might think came first in the natural order of importance. And I do not doubt for one moment that the branch of the question, which stands first in its own importance, and in the public estimation, is that which relates to the enfranchisement of large numbers of our fellow-countrymen now excluded from the electoral suffrage, but qualified, as we believe, to use it with credit and advantage.

This, Sir, we think to be the first and most urgent claim upon us; and this, therefore, unable as we are at the moment to deal in Parliament with the whole matter, we propose for immediate legislation. We might, it is true, have adopted a different mode of action; we might have framed a complete measure, or a complete set of measures, and might have thrown them on the table of this House, claiming credit for the comprehensiveness of our views, and availing ourselves of every

formula and commonplace of objection to legislating piecemeal. But we should have done this, knowing perfectly well that such measures could not, in all likelihood, within the time at our command, be duly considered; that the effect of the proposal would be to prevent the possibility, or at least mar the prospect, of real progress during the year; and that to all the unhappy miscarriages which have occurred in former sessions with relation to this subject, we were adding the certainty of another failure the most disastrous, and by far the most discreditable of them all. We have therefore determined to confine the Bill, which we are about to ask for leave to introduce, to the consideration of the electoral franchise; and we have founded this determination mainly on a review of the time and circumstances in which we stand, and on the amount of opportunity at our command.

Perhaps, however, it may be asked—and the demand is, I think, a fair one—what view we take of the Scotch electoral franchise. A question which has been put to me this day by an hon. Baronet opposite has, indeed, given me an intimation that we must not expect to stir this question in England, without being prepared to deal with it in Scotland also. What we ourselves think is, that a fair review of our representative system must include, if not all, yet unquestionably most, of the important subjects I have named. We freely admit that the present plan is incomplete. But it will be asked, "Do you intend to complete it?" Now, I have ever been averse—and I think that aversion is justified by general observation and experience—to dealing in pledges, which in a case like this must, in part at least, embrace a future Session. Such are the number and variety of the circumstances, which must affect the posi-

tion and duties of the Government of an Empire like ours, that we must, in my opinion, look to the future itself, to determine the proper opportunities for dealing with the portions not at present touched of this important question. This, however, I am free to say, that while I believe the group of questions bound up with the complex subject of Parliamentary Reform are beyond handling in one Session, and especially in what remains to us of the current Session, yet I cannot have the slightest doubt that, if the Government find it to be in their power to take up those other questions by way of direct sequel to the proposition which they now make, the present Parliament will be perfectly competent to discuss and decide whatever measures we may bring forward with relation to them.

Having arrived, Sir, as we some time back did arrive, at the conclusion that we ought to deal with the question of Parliamentary representation, and to approach it first in that branch which concerns the franchise, it was equally obvious to us that, if we did not revive the Bill for which we were responsible, as a Government in great part composed of the same individuals, in 1860, that Bill, at least, formed for us the natural starting-point of our inquiry. And now I will first take the question of the county representation. This is not a question beset with very great intrinsic difficulties; and I do not believe that it is regarded with anything like the jealousies, with which the question of the borough representation is surrounded. In the year 1860, a proposal was adopted by the Government, which had been contained in the Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for East Surrey, to reduce the occupation franchise in counties from 50*l.* to 10*l.* That proposal was not attended, I

believe, by any other proposal touching the county representation. What we now propose is a modification of this plan. We propose to reduce the occupation franchise—my statement is not precisely accurate when I say to reduce the occupation franchise, but it is accurate enough, and is, perhaps, the mode of speech which will generally be best understood—from 50*l.* to 14*l.* This reduction of the franchise from 50*l.* downwards will not, I have intimated, precisely correspond with the 50*l.* franchise as it now exists. We propose to leave that 50*l.* franchise precisely as it stands. The occupation franchise, which we propose between 50*l.* value and 14*l.* value, will be an occupation franchise, not of land alone, but of a house, or of a house with land. That is the nature of the franchise which we propose; and there is no great difficulty in sufficiently estimating, from the papers which have been laid on the table, the amount of enfranchisement which this change will produce. It would correspond, as nearly as possible, with the effect of a 12*l.* rating franchise. And, if hon. Members will look to the figures furnished by the volume of statistics which has been presented to Parliament with respect to a 12*l.* rating franchise, they will find, I think, that its effect, after making proper deductions for those who do not claim to vote, and for those who have not been in occupation a sufficient length of time to come upon the register, will be to add to the present number of county voters about 172,000 persons.

I may here be asked, why it is that we do not go down to the limit of 10*l.* I do not know, and I certainly cannot say, that there would be any danger, so far as I am able to discern, in going downwards to that limit; but what we think on the whole is this, that by the

change which the Bill recommends we shall obtain not only a very large, but a very independent addition to the county constituencies. At least we are of opinion that, by going from 14*l.* to 10*l.*, we should probably obtain not a more but a rather less independent reinforcement of the county voters. We have, I may add, no apprehension whatever with regard to the considerable enfranchisement which we propose; and we hope no such apprehension will prevail in any other quarter. It will, I think, be admitted on all hands, and I, for one, very strongly entertain the opinion, that this must be viewed as a middle-class enfranchisement. The county constituency, when thus enlarged, will be a middle-class constituency in the same sense as, nay rather more strictly than, under the present system. The number of persons properly belonging to the working-classes, and having a 14*l.* rental franchise, will be so very insignificant as hardly to be worth taking into calculation. Or at the least, I may say, that such portion of the newly enfranchised body as may belong to the labouring class, will be tenants of small holdings of land, in immediate connection with the class of landed proprietors, and likely to augment, more than to diminish, their influence over the representation.

We have looked, however, further into the matter, to see whether there were any cases in which, under the present law, there were interests of a more strictly proprietary character, interests connected with tenure, the most properly of all belonging to the county franchise, yet not provided for by the present law; and we found the following state of the law to prevail with regard to county franchises derived from property situate within the limits of cities and boroughs. We found that a man

possessed of a 40s. freehold within a borough might draw from it a county vote; but that, if he had within a borough a copyhold, which is a rare case, or a leasehold, which is much more common, and which is just as truly a proprietary interest as a 40s. freehold, and may in many cases be of fifty times the amount, he would not be entitled to vote for it in the county within which it lies. We propose, therefore, by a clause in the Bill, to give to the possessor of copyhold and leasehold property within the limits of boroughs the right of voting for the counties in which they are respectively situate, as if they were freeholders within the limits of boroughs, but of course under the same conditions of relative amount which are fixed by the present law for each of these descriptions of property.

I am not able to estimate what the numerical effect of this proposal will be. It would not be possible, I think, for us, as a Government, to obtain any adequate materials for the purpose. The admission cannot be numerically very large; but it must, I think, be good so far as it goes, because it will give a kind of constituency thoroughly germane to the nature and purposes of a county representation, according to the old rule of the Constitution.

I come now to another topic affecting counties, and it is the only remaining one I need mention. I introduce it at this point because it is in connection with counties, in my opinion, that it will have its principal operation. I must, Sir, briefly allude to the subject of those franchises, new to the Constitution, and distinct from the franchises of tenure and occupation, which have sometimes been pilloried with scoffing or irreverent names, but which may be properly called, I think,

special or bye-franchises. A number of those franchises were proposed by the Ministry of Lord Aberdeen in the Bill of 1854, and again in the Bill of 1859 by the Ministry of Lord Derby. So far as the Bill of 1854 is concerned, I may say that many of us, who form the present Government, were responsible for it. But we have considered further and very carefully the nature of those franchises, and the numerous considerations that bear on the policy of their introduction. And first of all I think I may say, without fear of contradiction, that they are not suitable or adequate as a general basis for extending the franchise. At the best, they can only be auxiliary. They do not in general admit any large number of such persons as you cannot get by the old customary constitutional means of occupation and tenure. They have, however, a great tendency to complicate the electoral system by introducing a multitude of titles and a diversity of investigations, thereby multiplying and increasing the expense, already very heavy, which is connected with our system of registration. And therefore, speaking generally, the effect of our review, I do not hesitate to say, has been unfavourable to the general introduction of those bye-franchises and special franchises. But there is one among them, with respect to which, although not attaching to it any exceeding importance, yet, notwithstanding, we think there are sufficient grounds for recommending it to the favourable notice of Parliament; I mean that which is called the Savings-banks franchise. The Savings-banks franchise has the following advantages. First of all, as far as it goes, it meets a feeling prevalent in the country, and a feeling to which we are disposed to give effect as far as we can without the

sacrifice of more important ends and aims; a feeling that it is desirable to include within the constituent body, by the method of what I may call spontaneous selection, some who could not be included by any method of franchise you could adopt, founded upon the old principles of occupation or tenure. Now certainly it must be true—it is beyond all reasonable doubt or question, although the nature of Savings banks does not allow us to offer you any actual demonstration of it—it is true without any doubt that provident habits enable many persons in early youth, many in very humble circumstances, many not having any independent holding, to amass their little stores by the time they come to legal age, and thereby, as we think, to qualify themselves, and justly qualify themselves, for taking part in the choice of those who are to govern the country. And, above all, the Savings-banks franchise has this notable advantage, that it is attended with no complication of title whatever. Every depositor in a Savings bank possesses—it is necessary for him as a depositor to possess—a book, in which is inserted every payment in he has made, and every payment out he has received, with the date of each and of all these payments; so that an inspection, which could hardly require a minute of time, would tell you, when you had fixed your standard, by the amount of balance remaining at the specified periods, whether a man is qualified to be put upon the register as a Savings-bank depositor or not. We therefore propose that all adult male depositors of 50*l.* and upwards, who have been possessed of that deposit for two years in a Savings bank, or in a Post Office Savings bank, shall be entitled to be registered for the place in which they may reside. The

place wherein they reside will, I think, commonly be outside the limits of a represented town. Of course, I do not mean because there will be no such depositors in Savings banks within the limits of towns, but because in the towns the nature of the general franchise may probably be such, as to include the great bulk of them. But a large proportion, I think, of these depositors will be found to be below the limits of the 14*l.* holding which is proposed for counties; and it is on that account that I mention the Savings banks in connection with this department of the electoral system.

With respect to the term I have mentioned, namely, two years, for the duration of the deposit, we do not follow precisely the arrangements proposed in some former Bills; but it is obviously proper to propose a certain period of time as an essential part of the qualification, in order to prevent this franchise from being used as a means of corruption.

And now, Sir, as to the probable, or possible, numbers of depositors in Savings banks who may be enfranchised. If we look to the Returns regarding the Savings banks, printed within the last few days, we find that, out of the imposing totals of the depositors of all classes, no less a number of male adults in England and Wales than 94,000 are depositors to the amount of 50*l.*, and of these, again, the depositors for two years amount to 87,000. But when we come to consider the probable operation of two most powerful causes, we shall find that we must not reckon upon large enfranchisements from this source. It would be a mere delusion, in my opinion, to look upon it as the probable means of a large enfranchisement. The first of these causes is, that so large a proportion of these persons will be enfranchised by other titles and

claims; and the second is, the immense deduction that ought to be made from the apparent effect of every provision for the extension of the franchise, when that franchise is accompanied, as it is of necessity in this case, with the condition that the possession of the franchise must be attended with the trouble of an annual claim. Now the trouble of an annual claim in this case is inevitable. The money might be withdrawn, the qualification might be lost; and to prevent gross abuse it is absolutely necessary that a claim should be made. We cannot in a case like this relieve the depositor from his trouble by means of a public offer. The claim must, therefore, be made, and must be renewed from year to year; and, therefore, although we think this a good franchise, we offer it simply as a collateral and subsidiary franchise. If it adds 10,000 or 15,000 to the electoral body, I believe that is an outside estimate of what it will do. It is right, however, to observe that any estimate of numbers under this head must necessarily be matter of conjecture. But, at any rate, it is a very good franchise as far as it goes; and moreover we hope that under the operation of the Post Office Savings banks it will be a franchise having a tendency gradually to extend itself.

These remarks, I think, Sir, complete what I have to say upon the subject of the county suffrage. And I repeat that the enfranchisement in counties will, according to the plan of the Government, as far as we can see, be a middle-class enfranchisement. The effect of it will be not to increase the relative share of the working classes in the representation, but, on the contrary, to diminish that share proportionately; because the influence of the working classes, represented by the very

small freeholders, will form hereafter a diminished percentage of the entire county constituency, as compared with that which exists at the present moment.

Mr. BRIGHT: What will be the proportion — how much for the house, and how much for the land?

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: There must be a house; and if the house is inhabited by the man, there is no condition as to its value; while, if it is not inhabited by the man, it must be worth 6*l.* at least, or nearly one-half of the whole county qualification. And I will now pass to the question of the franchise in boroughs.

I think it will contribute to clearness, which, above all things, I am desirous to study, if I first call the attention of the House to the fact that the inhabitants of towns, for the purpose of enfranchisement, may be dealt with in four distinct classes. One class, and this is the principal class, inhabit separate houses, or at the least separately rated buildings, and likewise undertake to pay their own rates. These are the proper objects of the Reform Act of 1832 with respect to the franchise; and these I shall call ratepaying householders. The next class consists of persons who inhabit their own houses, and whose houses are separately rated, but who do not pay their own rates; these being paid otherwise, either under Mr. Sturges Bourne's Act; or, and more commonly, under the Small Tenements Rating Act; or, in certain towns, under particular local Acts. In all these cases, the rates are paid by the landlord. I shall designate these inhabitants of towns by a phrase by which they are best known, though I am not sure that it is one of exact legal precision; I shall term them compound householders. The third class of persons, with respect to whom it appears that they have now in

law a claim to enfranchisement, like the two former classes, but whose claim is, as far as we can obtain information, practically null and valueless, is formed of those who not only do not pay their own rates, but whose holdings are not separately rated. That is to say, they are inhabitants of a separate portion of a house, but this separate portion is not separately rated; and these persons pay their rents without any specified reference to rates whatever. The first two classes we think to be properly householders. There has been some tendency, I believe, in the course of legal decisions to favour enfranchisement; and, accordingly, either to introduce the third class under the title of householders, or if not, yet to give them the effect of that title, that is to say, to consider these persons as qualified for the franchise, though not strictly householders. But I much doubt whether, except in a few instances, such as the case of Victoria Street, Westminster, where the houses are partitioned into separate holdings of a very superior class, so that there can be no question of their sufficiency of value, this class is now to be found in practice on the list or register of voters at all. As regards them, inasmuch as they are not separately rated, we hold it better, I might almost say we find it indispensable, to deal with them as being practically, for our purpose, lodgers. The only mode under the present law, by which they could obtain the franchise, would be by getting their holdings separately rated. The enormous majority of them are, I believe, to be found in London; and, as nothing could be more inconvenient than to establish an electoral law requiring parishes to adopt rating arrangements, not useful for rating purposes, but only arbitrarily imposed upon them for the purpose of the franchise, we think it better to

let things take their natural course. Substantially, these persons are found standing in the category of lodgers; and as lodgers we deal with them, although generally speaking there is an open door, a common staircase, and an access to the abode, or tenement, independently of the landlord or his representative. The fourth class are lodgers properly so called; being persons who inhabit their own rooms, but as inmates in the houses, indeed, in the domestic establishments, of others. These four classes we deal with as being substantially two, namely, householders and lodgers respectively, for the purposes of our Bill.

And let us now approach the question on which, it is idle to disguise, so much indecision, so much jealousy, and so much apprehension exist; namely, the question of the town franchise. We, Sir, desire, as far as depends on us, to remove all that indecision, to allay that jealousy, and to abate that apprehension. We think this can best be done, in the first place, by a full exposition of the facts of the case. What is the present state of the town constituencies? and what progress has been made by them, as compared with the population in the represented towns, since 1832? In 1832, the town constituencies, taken in gross, numbered 282,000 voters. Of these, 63,000 and odd were freemen; 44,000 and odd were voters under the scot and lot, and other old rights of a popular character; and 174,000 were 10*l.* householders. Between 1832 and 1865 the ten-pounders rose to 463,000. The gross total of the constituency—we have no nett total for the year 1832, and therefore I can only compare the gross numbers—the gross total of the constituency was 514,000 in 1865. That shows since 1832 an increase of 82 per cent.

Within the same period the population of the represented towns has increased as follows. In 1831 the population of the towns was 5,207,000; in 1865 it is calculated to have been 9,326,000. The increase, then, has been 4,119,000 or 79 per cent. So that the growth of the constituency—and I wish to call the attention of the House to this fact—the growth of the constituency in towns, notwithstanding the vast augmentation of the wealth of the country, has practically but just exceeded the bare growth of the population. That is, I apprehend, an important fact for the House to bear in mind. In the counties it is otherwise; there the growth of the constituency has been as great, but the growth of the population has been much less; so that the growth of the constituency has been considerably beyond the increase of the population.

I now come to a point of very great interest and also of importance; and I think the House will be of opinion that, if three or four months have been spent in the collection of these Returns, they would not have been ill-spent, even though they should have led to no other result than the particulars contained in the Blue Book of Friday last, with respect to the representation of the working classes in the present constituency. The figures, as they stand, come to the following result. I mentioned, I think, that the gross town constituency was 514,000. Great pains have been taken in every case to strike off double entries, and I have no doubt that has been done with considerable precision. The nett number of the constituency, as far as we can ascertain, is now 489,000. Generally through my statement, for the convenience of the House, I confine myself to thousands, and reject odd numbers. The 10*l.* voters of the working classes are

returned as 108,000, and the freemen and old-right voters of the working classes as 20,000; making a total of 128,000; and showing an apparent percentage of 26 per cent. of the present constituencies as belonging to the working classes. Well, now, Sir, there will be, I have no doubt, some dispute as to the soundness of our definition of the working man; and I am bound to say that our definition is a large definition. [Mr. WHITE: Hear, hear!] I believe, however, that, though imperfect and disputable, yet it is practically the least faulty definition that can be found. [Mr. WHITE: Hear, hear!] Let my honourable Friend try his hand at framing a better; he will find it no easy matter. I do not believe the phrase "working men" admits of accurate definition; but we have found the only definition we could take is undoubtedly a liberal definition; so that you might say that 10 or that 20 per cent. of those included in the working class under our definition are so considerably interested in shopkeeping, or are otherwise in circumstances of such a nature, that they ought not to be found among the working class. There is beyond question a certain amount of debateable ground, a fringe of uncertainty, between class and class. I think it right to notice this, in order that there may be a clear understanding of the case as it stands. But suppose we deduct 20 per cent. from the amount, the result of these remarkable figures will still be, that not less than 21 per cent. of the constituency may be considered as belonging to the working class. And I freely own it is a larger percentage than I had expected to find. I am very glad that this is so; and, if the percentage were still higher, I should like it all the better.

But I must observe upon this infusion of the working

class in the present constituency that, in the first place, it is exceedingly unequal. I have gone roughly over the 200 boroughs, and I think I gathered together about sixty boroughs, in which the proportion the working class possessed of the franchise was not less than one-third. I gathered thirty other boroughs, commonly boroughs of greater importance, and in these I found the proportion of the working class was not more than one-tenth. Again, this distribution of the working class is not only unequal, but I must say, as being myself a Northerner, it is least where it ought to be largest; I mean in the towns of the North. As an illustration of this remark, I will mention the names of six towns. In Oldham, with a constituency of 2285, the working class are represented by 315, or one in 8 of the population; in Halifax, with a constituency of 1771, the working class stand at 171, or one in 10; in Stockport, with a constituency of 1348, the working class are 124, or one in 11; in Bradford, with a constituency of 5189, the working class are 438, or one in 12; in Leeds, with a constituency of 7217, the working class stand at 523, or one in 14. And last of all, there is a town which deserves special mention, not only on account of the distinguished man by whom it was but twelve months ago represented, but for other reasons—I mean the town of Rochdale, which has probably done more than any other town in making good to practical minds a case for some enfranchisement of the working classes; because it is the town where that remarkable system, nay, what appeared at first sight, I do not hesitate to say, that most critical and even perilous system, obtained, under which the working class ousted the retail dealer from his accustomed province, and took into its own hands

the business of supply; but where, through the extraordinary intelligence and self-governing power of these men, that system has been brought to a most happy, most successful issue, and has become a source of the greatest comfort and profit to the labouring community. What is the case in Rochdale? With a constituency of 1358, the enfranchised working class stands at only 68, or one in 20. I say, then, that if the percentage of the working class, taken over the whole constituency, be more satisfactory than I, in common I believe with others, was led to expect, the manner of its distribution is even less satisfactory. The case of Rochdale is, indeed, a little peculiar. It so happens that a district which naturally would belong to it is not included in it; and that circumstance illustrates the necessity of including some consideration of the present state of boundaries in any complete revision of the representative system.

Well, Sir, we are very much pleased, and in good humour with ourselves, because we find that 26, or more probably that 21, per cent. of the working classes are included in the borough constituencies. Let me now approach another point. How stood this proportion in 1832? I have endeavoured to make the best estimate in my power, because this, too, is a very interesting and important question. I apprehend there cannot be the smallest doubt of the propositions I am now about to state. First of all, that the enfranchisement of the working class, as it stood in 1832, was not an excessive enfranchisement at that time. Secondly, that the advance of the working class, since 1832, in everything that can entitle men to some share in the Government of their country, has been a great and an undeniable

advance. It is not denied on any hand—whether we take education in schools; whether we take social conduct; whether we take obedience to the law; whether we take self-command and power of endurance, shown under difficulty and privation; whether we take respect for the rights and liberties of others; whether we take avidity for knowledge and self-improvement; if we apply any one of these tests, or any other test that can be named, there can be no doubt at all that, if the working man in any given degree was fit to share in political privileges in 1832, he has, at any rate, attained a considerable further degree of fitness now. How, then, I ask, stands the case now as compared with 1832? In 1832 there were 63,000 freemen. I take the proportion of working men among the whole body of freemen at that date to have been the same as by our Returns we find it to be now, that is to say, to have been 54 per cent. of that number; consequently, there were then 34,000 freemen belonging to the working class. The scot and lot and potwallopers were 45,000, and I assume that 60 per cent. of these voters belonged to the working class. In my opinion that is a very moderate estimate; an estimate below the truth. The 10*l.* occupiers in 1832 were 174,000. I assume, for the purpose of comparison (which, however, I deem open to question), that in 1832 the working class represented only 15 per cent. of the 10*l.* occupiers of that day. The result of this computation is that, of the total constituency of 282,000 in 1832, the proportion belonging to the working class was 87,000, or 31 per cent. They are now at the very outside not more than 26 per cent. It is not satisfactory, in all points of view, to deal with this question as a matter of pure statistics; but then I must

say, if these statistics can prove anything, the figures I have quoted do prove that the working class, which ought to have borne an increasing and growing proportion, has instead borne, during these thirty-four years, a dwindling and diminishing proportion to the whole number of the town constituency, and consequently that the time has arrived when something ought to be done to increase their share in the elective franchise.

And now, Sir, if I may take so great a liberty, I wish to address one word to Gentlemen opposite. No wile, no stratagem can lie in what I am about to say; it is the simplest thing in the world. Let them remark the distribution of the working-class voters in different parts of the constituency; I would even promise them that they may, if they will, derive immense consolation from it; and let them observe the effect of this working-class element upon the relative strength of political parties; because it is not to be denied that there is among them, and I admit not unnaturally, a considerable apprehension of the effect of a large enfranchisement, or of any enfranchisement, of the working class, with regard to a diminution of that particular Parliamentary influence, which most naturally and justifiably these Gentlemen regard as the influence most essential to the well-being of the State. I will, for the purpose of illustration, take a case which we may call celebrated on the one side, and notorious on the other. How stands the population of the working classes in the metropolitan boroughs as compared with the rest of the country? England, without the metropolitan boroughs, has, in her town constituency, 27 per cent. of the working classes; England, within the metropolitan boroughs, has only 23 per cent. of the working classes; and yet I

apprehend that it is an undoubted fact that, if there be one section of Members who steadily, perseveringly, and uniformly represent Liberalism in this House—a somewhat advanced Liberalism indeed, but also, I am glad to think, sometimes a philosophic Liberalism too, it is that section of Members, who have been sent up to this House by the metropolitan boroughs. Thus, then, from constituencies having the smallest proportion of the working classes have been sent up Members the least "Conservative," in the party sense of that term. That is my small modicum of consolation, humbly, but sincerely, offered to the reflection of Gentlemen opposite.

I have stated, Sir, that the Government, in approaching the consideration of this question, naturally took the Bill of 1860 as their starting point. It may be asked whether, as to the towns, we adopt the Bill of 1860 *simpliciter*. Let me now call the attention of the House to what took place in 1860. And though we then spent ten nights apparently in doing next to nothing, and although a good deal that was irrelevant was then said in comparing our own institutions with those of other countries, it is my duty to admit that in the course of the discussion of that year some important facts were elicited. I do not think that, if we had been permitted to proceed into Committee on the Bill of 1860, we could have held by it exactly as it stood. Not because, in our view of the Bill, it would have admitted too many persons to the franchise. What was the view we then took of it? My noble Friend now at the head of the Government, in introducing the Bill on the 1st of March, pointed out that the effect of it would be, as he judged, to enfranchise 194,000 persons in the boroughs;

but that was, in our belief, an outside estimate; and during the time the Bill was before the House we saw reason rather to contract it than otherwise. Sir George Lewis, than whom no man certainly could be a more acute or more impartial judge, estimated the number from later information at 160,000. My honourable Friend the Member for Birmingham had taken it at about the same amount, from 160,000 to 170,000. I do not think any one who is of opinion that our borough representation should be remodelled would say that was an unreasonable or an unduly large enfranchisement; but it was, as we found, an enfranchisement badly distributed and imperfectly adjusted. We must bear in mind that the metropolis, as measured by its population, is equal to one-third part of the whole of the represented towns in the country; and undoubtedly, I think it could be shown that the operation of that Bill would have been highly unequal as between the metropolis and the provincial towns. Very large numbers would have been enfranchised in very many considerable towns; but it was shown to us that in London, under the present law, numbers of persons are excluded from the franchise as it now exists, although they come within it according to the spirit of the law. I refer to those compound householders, who cannot number less than 40,000 in London alone. This large body of persons, though standing on a footing of social equality with many of the present voters, the Bill of 1860 virtually passed by. The Bill of 1860 was, it might almost be said, of no use at all to London. Such was even then the scale of rents in the metropolis, that a descent from 10*l.* to 6*l.* in the rental of houses was of no importance whatever. It is quite true that this Bill for establishing a 6*l.* occupation fran-

chise did, according to our estimates, purport to enfranchise a number somewhere between 160,000 and 200,000 men; and that other estimates were placed in competition with ours, which placed the numbers higher. The then Member for Marylebone (Mr. Edwin James) made a most effective speech in relation to some points connected with the London constituency: and the number of persons, likely to be admitted in the various London boroughs under the 6*l.* franchise, he estimated, I think most extravagantly, at about 400,000. But a Committee of the House of Lords, which considered this question, by a large majority adopted a vote involving the proposition that the 6*l.* franchise would have enfranchised a number I think approaching, if not even exceeding, 300,000. Now we could not admit these computations; we held to our own belief; and we still placed the number of the working classes, that would be admitted to the franchise, at from 160,000 to 180,000 or thereabouts. While we contended that this was a proper number to admit, we also contended that the franchise should be placed at 6*l.* Now I am bound to avow that, if the Bill had proceeded into Committee, the two propositions could not have stood together. Either the one allegation or the other must have been given up. No one would have asked Parliament to bring down the franchise to 6*l.*, and yet to leave a great mass of 10*l.* householders unenfranchised. We must have given these last the advantage of a real admission. Not wishing, then, to disturb the relations of class to class, we should, if we had gone into Committee, probably have had to make a change as regarded the 6*l.* rental. The most authoritative statement on the subject was that offered by Lord Russell himself towards

the close of the discussion, after the debates in the House of Commons had shown the imperfection of the proposed arrangement. On June 4, 1860, my noble Friend said—

"And this I will say, that, if you will propose any of the measures that have been mentioned this evening either for raising the franchise by making it a rating instead of a rental franchise, or by increasing the amount of the rental, or, in another way that has been pointed out, by admitting a great number of voters who are distinguished by property, or by a high degree of knowledge, from those belonging to the working classes any proposition of the kind shall be fairly considered by us in Committee. We certainly shall not declare ourselves so completely wedded to the franchise which we have put forward that we will not submit to treat on the subject. If in Committee such a proposal as I have alluded to be made, and if the House should prefer it to that which we have originated, it will be our duty to see whether the Bill with such an alteration would be a valuable measure, whether it would extend the franchise in a manner that would strengthen the institutions of the country; and, in that case, though we might not think it a change for the better, we should be ready to adopt that alteration."

Sir, it was in our view essential, as was declared by a Motion carried in this House in 1859, that any fresh enfranchisement in the towns should be principally an enfranchisement downwards. But now that the facts have been brought before us, we find they prove that, through some defective operation of the present law, large numbers of persons, being householders, who pay

a rent which the law allows to be a sufficient presumptive qualification, are not in possession of the franchise; and we find it impossible to overlook the claims of these persons. We find it to be our very first duty to inquire how many and who there are that, being above the line of 10*l.*, and being at present within the spirit of the law, still remain practically unenfranchised; and then to devise some plan whereby they may be enfranchised.

The first question, then, for us to ask is, what are the defects in the law which bring about the result complained of? They are two; one of them I have already glanced at; and I will now mention the other. By the present law, a man fulfilling the various conditions with respect to the time and value of occupation, and to being rated, cannot be brought upon the register unless he has paid the Queen's taxes, and the local rates made since a certain date. This is usually called the ratepaying clause. Men do not call it the taxpaying clause. And certainly, as far as the Queen's taxes are concerned, if I may venture to form a judgment upon the investigations we have made, I think the local authorities have been exceedingly considerate, and have not given much trouble to the voters. But so far as the ratepaying provisions have been considered, there has been a great obstacle to enfranchisement; some trouble has been occasioned, and many have lost the benefit of the vote. It has been supposed sometimes that the local authorities, for particular purposes, did not apply for the payment of the rates until the time had elapsed when the payment would secure the vote; while in other cases, do not let us conceal from ourselves the fact, voters belonging to the two parties, at any rate a portion of them, have had their taxes paid by the political agents

respectively, in the interest of the respective candidates. In one instance, the local gentleman who most candidly sent up information of this tenour to the Government, discreetly wished it to be understood that his communication was to be considered confidential. Again, there are certain boroughs where the law is systematically, and by a joint understanding, overlooked on both sides. All this is bad, and bad in various ways. The operation of the law has been unjust, unequal, ineffective, vexatious; and this is a clause which we propose to do away with altogether. In Liverpool I do not overstate the case when I say that there are not less than 6000 or 7000 persons, and probably more, whose rates are regularly collected from the landlords by arrangement with the parish officers, and therefore those persons are disfranchised. Strictly, they are not compound householders, but ratepaying householders; and yet they lose the franchise, contrary to the intention of the Reform Act, and without any fault of their own. We propose, therefore, to abolish this clause; and we expect, as the victims of this clause are almost all of the class that come within the general designation of working men, we shall by this means admit to the constituency not less than 25,000 persons of those whom I call above the line, that is, above the line of an occupation of 10*l.* in value.

Then we come to the question of the compound householders; and here what we think just and right is, that the compound householder should be treated exactly like the ratepaying householder. If the rent of the house is on such a scale that, in the judgment of the Legislature, the holder of it is a suitable person to be enfranchised, it is perfectly certain, as an economical

truth, that the rates upon that house, though paid in the first instance by the landlord, are ultimately and truly paid by the tenant; and it cannot make any difference to us, it does not seem to justify drawing any line of political distinction, that, instead of being paid directly by the householder, they are paid by the landlord, and charged by him on the tenant in the rental.

At present the law is defective in this respect, that the name of the compound householder does not commonly appear upon the rate-book. Now, for the proper purposes of rating, it ought so to appear; and in an Amendment that we shall have to propose in the law of rating, we shall provide that the name of the holder of a house, as well as of any rated holding that is not a house, shall appear upon the rate-book. From the rate-book, just like the name of a ratepaying householder, it will pass to the list of voters, without imposing trouble or burden of any kind upon the householder himself. Being thus on the list of voters, it will be subject to the scrutiny of the Revising Barrister, just like the name of a ratepaying householder; and, unless proper ground of objection shall be preferred, it will take its place upon the register. An effective enfranchisement, therefore, will be given under the Bill to the compound householders; whereas, up to the present time, their enfranchisement has been almost purely speculative. There are, indeed, some instances to the contrary. I rather think the great town of Birmingham is one such instance. But the metropolis affords by far the most important illustration of the present operation of the law; and in the metropolis you may say, without any fear of contradiction, not only that the compound householders are not on the register in one case in fifty, but likewise that,

when they are on the register, it is because, for some particular purpose, an election agent has thought it worth his while himself to find out the names, prefer the claims, and get them put on the register. Now, that is not the way in which we want a constituency to be fashioned; and if our proposition be adopted, the name of the compound householder will be put upon the rate-book and the register without the trouble and difficulty of a claim, and by the very same spontaneous process as that by which the name of the man, who pays the rates himself, comes upon the list which enables him to vote.

Then comes the other class to which I have already alluded; a class of persons also very numerous in the metropolis. I mean those who inhabit flats, and portions of houses, which flats, or portions of houses, though having a separate access, are not made the subject of separate rating. Now, with regard to this class, we can, I believe, do nothing as to bringing them upon the register by the act of a public officer, but we must in that respect leave them just as they are. At present, if they can show that the value of the apartments which they occupy comes up to what the law calls the clear annual value of 10*l.*, and if they can get themselves to be rated—which I believe they are entitled to ask, though a test of that kind must in practice generally form an insuperable obstacle—they may, by a circuitous process, cause themselves to be placed upon the list of voters. Now, under our Bill there will be no necessity that the apartments should be separately rated; and that difficulty, consequently, will be obviated. Thus we propose to confer on them a great advantage by the removal of an obstacle: but we can do no more. A public officer cannot know the rent that these people

pay. He knows the value of the holding of the compound householder, because for rating purposes it is necessary that he should know the value of the house; but he does not know, and cannot know, the rent that is paid by a man who inhabits only part of a house, that part not being separately rated. That class, therefore, we must leave as they are now, subject to the burden of claiming. If any such person can show that his rooms are of a clear annual value of 10*l.*, the benefit he will derive from the Bill will be that he will be released from all necessity of being rated, and he may then come upon the register; but he will come upon it with the necessity of renewing his claim from year to year.

Sir John Pakington: What is the estimated number that will be added by these provisions?

The Chancellor of the Exchequer: We believe there will be an addition of probably 35,000 persons to the constituency in consequence of the provisions we propose to make respecting compound householders above the line of 10*l.*, by far the larger part of that addition being in the metropolis. The estimate, I think, is sufficiently near to accuracy; because we have ascertained the number of houses in the different parishes which are compounded for, or where the rates are paid by the landlord. We do not, however, expect that any large number of the holders of flats will register.

Thus far, Sir, I have given the House an anticipation of what I may call our enfranchisement above the line. The number we think amounts to 60,000 persons—namely, 25,000 by the abolition of the ratepaying clauses, and 35,000 by the new provisions of the law with regard to compound householders.

I now come to a question of considerable interest,

the question which is commonly called that of the "lodger franchise." Now, we propose to place lodgers, properly so called—that is, persons who hold rooms as inmates of another man's house or household—exactly upon the same footing as those who hold tenements or apartments, that is to say, rooms or parts only of a house having no separate rating, although with a separate access. Those two classes we shall treat together, just as we treated together ratepaying and compound householders, and, in fact, every person who, because separately rated, will, according to the provisions of our Bill, come upon the list of voters at once by the action of the proper public authority. Taking together those two classes, we, on the other hand, also take together those men who dwell in tenements and apartments (so to call them), and those who dwell in lodgings. And the provision we make is this—that if they can show that the rooms they inhabit are of the clear annual value of 10*l.*, of course without including either rates, taxes, or cost of furniture, they will be entitled, upon claiming year by year, to be placed upon the list of voters. The conditions as to time of occupation are, I need hardly say, the same in all these cases.

But I must now refer to the proposal as to the lodger franchise contained in the Bill of 1859. It was proposed by the Ministry then in power that any person paying 20*l.* by the year, or 8*s.* by the week, for any rooms, whether furnished or unfurnished, should be entitled, upon making his claim, and subject to certain conditions, to be placed upon the register. Now, there are, we conceive, insuperable difficulties in the way of any attempt to constitute any franchise

resting upon the rent paid for furnished apartments. In the first place, bear in mind that the clear annual value of rooms is a thing which is continually estimated from day to day in every town in the country, and which is capable, therefore, of being brought to some definite standard. On the other hand, if we endeavoured to deal with furniture, and with the portion of rent paid for it—for the use, that is, of moveable commodities—it would be a very fluctuating and inconvenient basis for the franchise. If, however, the case is unsatisfactory when you view it with regard to furniture alone, much more defective is the basis proposed when we come to consider that the sum of 20*l.* a year, or of 8*s.* a week, or any other sum paid for furnished lodgings, not only includes furniture with the rooms, but it includes almost always more or less of personal service. It includes sometimes firing, sometimes cooking, very commonly the use of the kitchen fire. In point of fact, it gives a basis including elements of so uncertain and slippery a character that it would be quite impossible to employ it with advantage for the purposes of enfranchisement. I hope the right honourable Gentleman opposite (Mr. Disraeli) will not think I am criticizing his Bill in a censorious spirit, because I have done so no more freely than I have performed the same operation on our own Bill of 1860, with respect to its inequality as between the metropolis and the country. I wish the House, therefore, to understand—for I know that great and very natural interest has been excited on the question of the lodger franchise—that we propose to deal with it, if not fully, yet in a manner which we think will include every case, and more than every *bonâ fide* case, that could

have been included by the provisions of the Bill of 1859; because if a man pays 20*l.* a year for furnished lodgings, those lodgings ought to be, and as a rule, unless many other things besides the use of furniture were included, would be, worth more than 10*l.* of clear annual value as defined by the law. Supposing, then, the rooms which a lodger occupies are of 10*l.* annual value, he will under our Bill be entitled, subject to the usual conditions as to time of occupation, to claim, and to come upon the list of voters.

Now, I can give no information, and I believe the right honourable Gentleman was unable to give any in 1859, as to the number of persons who would, perhaps, be enfranchised under the title of lodgers; but this I may say, that, in the first place, my firm belief is that it will be a small one; and, in the second place, my firm belief likewise is this, what I now speak of will prove to be a middle-class rather than a lower-class enfranchisement. The operation of claiming, and of claiming, too, year by year, is one that must be very burdensome to working men; whereas young men, such as clerks and men of business, familiar with the use of pen and ink, if educated and intelligent persons, and desirous of obtaining the franchise, will estimate the trouble somewhat more lightly. We calculate, therefore, on a certain amount especially of middle-class enfranchisement by the provision I have described; but I should be misleading the House were I to pretend to entertain the opinion that either any large number of the working class, or any very large number even of the middle-class, will come upon the register by virtue of that which we term a lodger franchise. A great number of persons now inhabit

tenements, being almost all of them working men, and all of them theoretically entitled, out of whom scarcely any find their way to the register; and this is, in my opinion, a demonstration that no very large or considerable additions to the constituency are to be expected from a source, where there is the impediment of a claim renewable yearly. Consequently, I do not venture to add any figures under this head; but I take the 60,000 persons, whom I have already named, as comprising the amount of additional enfranchisement granted thus far by the provisions of the Bill which I have the honour of asking leave to introduce.

I next come to the question of that description of enfranchisement which I venture to call enfranchisement below the line—that is to say, enfranchisement as it relates to any portions of the community holding occupations from the limit of 10*l.* downwards, which is not only a necessary, but is in our view the most important part of any measure relating to this subject.

My noble Friend Lord Russell, in a speech delivered in 1860, adverted to the possibility of changing the proposal for a 6*l.* rental franchise into one for a rating franchise of the same amount. The question of a rating franchise has always been one of the greatest interest to those who have been engaged in the preparation of our numerous, I will add, our too numerous, Reform Bills. The advantage of having an external standard to determine the claim for registration, not based simply upon a process which, as often as the question is raised, each man must institute anew for his own particular case, but dependent on the evidence of a public authority, though guarded by an appeal, it being the business of that public authority to fix

the value of a holding for certain parochial purposes, which are not political—the value of a franchise of that kind, considered narrowly and closely from such a point of view, is obvious and great. There was another reason also, which, but for objections which I shall presently mention, would have led us to the adoption of a rating franchise; to the adoption probably of the very franchise indicated in the passage of the speech of my noble Friend to which I have referred. The Small Tenements Act provides that in all the boroughs where it is adopted—and it is adopted in, I think, a considerable numerical majority of the boroughs in the country—for every tenement up to, and also including, those of 6*l*., the rates shall be paid not by the occupier, but by the landlord. Now there would have been a great advantage in saying, "We will adopt the precise limit which Parliament has indicated, as expressing its view of the capacity to pay direct local taxes. Where that capacity begins, the franchise shall begin; where that capacity ends, the franchise shall end also." But when we came to look at the operation of the Small Tenements Act, which includes all houses of a value of 6*l*., as well as those under that value, we found, first of all, that the total enfranchisement would not have exceeded 80,000 persons; and we did not think that this was such a number as, upon one of these rarely recurring occasions of the readjustment of the franchise, we could propose to Parliament, or hold out to the country as anything like a settlement of the question of the suffrage in towns. But then we were met by another question—and this is the last of the drier subjects which I shall have to submit to your consideration. It is nevertheless, I think, one of some

importance, and one in respect to which I may well beg to invite your attention during a few minutes.

We were called upon to consider the great change—I will go further and say, the great Reform—which has been effected by my right honourable Friend the President of the Poor Law Board, through the medium of the Union Assessment Act. In former times it was said, "Why not have a rated franchise, a franchise taken from the rate-book?" But the inequality of that rating was so gross and so anomalous in the various parts of the country, that, though we did admit it into the Bill of 1854, we, nevertheless, subsequently considered that it could not prove a satisfactory basis for the franchise. The rating, however, is now immensely improved. It is, of course, our duty to take the best and simplest basis for the franchise that we can find. The simple question, however, arises, whether there is not another basis, supplied by the law of rating as it now stands, more nearly coinciding with the present basis, although differing from it in legal expression, which is better than the basis of rateable value. We think there is. It is in substance the same which the law now recognises, namely, the "clear annual value;" but it is the clear annual value as determined by the column in the rate-book, called the "gross estimated rental." Now, rating is good chiefly if we consider it as the adoption of a public independent standard—a standard supposed to be impartially chosen for local taxation. But in everything in which the column of rateable value is good, the gross estimated rental is good also; whereas it escapes many sources of error and of inequality which are inherent in rateable value. For the rateable value, after all, is estimated by certain deductions made from

the gross estimated rental. The rateable value contains no new and independent element of information which we do not get from the gross estimated rental. The rateable value is not, again, *per se*, the proper test to adopt as the basis of the franchise. It is not the test of what a man actually pays for his tenement, but it is only the test of the net value of the tenement to the person beneficially interested. This is no doubt important for the parish officers, inasmuch as it determines relative capacity to pay; but it is a test with which we have really nothing to do for the purpose of the suffrage. You may, for example, have two houses, paying 20*l.* a year each. One of those may belong to a solid and substantial class of houses, and may only require a deduction of 4*l.* or 6*l.* per cent. for repairs; but the other may have been built of slight materials, and may therefore require much more money from year to year, perhaps not less than from 15*l.* to 20*l.* per cent., to keep it in repair, and in a condition equally good with the other house. But, when kept in repair, the same rent is paid for them both. And the same franchise, according to the view of Parliament under the circumstances I have referred to, might fairly be demanded by the occupiers. But if we adopt the standard of actual rating as the basis of the franchise, one would be enfranchised, whilst the other would be excluded.

Again, there will also remain an element of inequality in the column of rateable value in reference to insurance, as well as to repairs. The duty on insurance has of itself undergone a material change within the last few years. My honourable Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Hubbard) pointed out some time ago that the fire insurance duty amounted to 4 or 5 per

cent. on the net income from the house, when it stood at 3*s.* per cent. But it is now reduced to half that amount. Consequently the deduction from gross estimated rental on account of insurance ought to be changed; and it might again change hereafter, with any changes which Parliament might make from time to time in the amount of the duty. For reasons, Sir, such as these, we propose to take gross estimated rentals as the practical basis of the title to vote. We connect this proposition with the present legal rule, by saying that the column of the gross estimated rental shall be *primâ facie* evidence, until contested, of the clear annual value. Thus, we shall secure the double object of adhering to the present definition, and yet of avoiding all the inequalities inherent in the test of rated value; while, at the same time, we shall in this manner attain that simplicity, certainty, and facility, which is obtained by the use of the rate-book, as a public and impartial document in each parish of the country.

Now, Sir, the gross estimated rental is, as we find, upon the whole, in exact correspondence with the rack rent. There are, however, some local irregularities, and there will, of course, be an appeal to the revising barrister. But, in all the boroughs except thirty, the gross estimated rental appears to be, under the operation of the Act introduced by my right honourable Friend (Mr. Villiers), as nearly as possible equal to the rack rent. In these thirty boroughs one-half exhibit a considerable inequality; but it is in general only because the operations under the Act of my right honourable Friend are not quite completed. Certainly, before any practical steps can be taken under this Bill those operations will have been brought to a close. There are a few other

cases of local acts, and certain cases in the metropolis, where, in point of fact, the column of gross estimated rental is not at present in accordance with the true principles of the Union Assessment Act. That is to say, it represents a mere conventional sum. With a view to correct this inequality, we intend to propose certain enactments; and then we can with confidence recommend the gross estimated rental as uniformly a proper basis for the franchise. But then, even while these inequalities exist in a few particular cases, we have a means of applying a test with sufficient accuracy to the gross estimated rental as a whole. We have called for the Income Tax returns. We know that many of these represent a sum considerably above the rack rent; for in every case where the landlord pays the rates he includes them in his returns, and consequently the income-tax assessment is, in many cases, in advance of the rack rent. Much oftener still is it in advance of the nett or real annual value. Now the gross annual Income Tax returns, in which we must allow for all excesses, give a total valuation of 39,238,000*l.*; and the gross estimated rental, though still defective in some places, amounts to 37,375,000*l.* The difference at this moment, therefore, is only 1,863,000*l.*, or 5 per cent. We have, therefore, no hesitation whatever in the substance of what we propose; as we feel that we can now found ourselves upon a secure basis of operation, which will be the means of introducing a great practical improvement in the administration of the electoral law of the country.

It appears, Sir, that the present town constituency consists of 488,000 persons. Dividing this aggregate number as above the line of the working classes or

below it, I find that in the latter category there are 126,000, according to a large and liberal estimate, who belong to the working classes; while I take 362,000 as the number of voters in the towns who undoubtedly do not belong to those classes. We propose, as I have said, to add 60,000 to the present number of 10*l.* voters. All these I reckon, for the purpose of my statement, as if they belonged to the working classes. I do not now refer to the lodger, or to the depositor in Savings banks; both of these would probably be of small numbers; and the lodgers, at any rate, of mixed and varied condition. Up to this point, then, I may roughly reckon that we shall have 186,000 persons, more or less, on the future register, who belong to the working class. If to these the persons of a 6*l.* rental were added, I find that this would be the result. A 6*l.* rental, calculated upon the most careful investigation, and after making every allowance and deduction that ought to be made, would give 242,000 new voters, whom I should take as all belonging to the working class. I should thus arrive at a gross total of 428,000 persons, which would, in fact, probably at once place the working classes in a clear majority upon the entire town constituency. Now, Sir, that has never been the intention of any Bill proposed in this House. I do not think it is a proposal that Parliament would be disposed to adopt. I cannot say I think it would be attended with great danger; but I am sure it is not according to the present view or expectation of Parliament. And although for my own part I do not think that much apprehension need be entertained with respect to the working classes, even if admitted in larger numbers than we propose, yet this I fully admit, that upon general grounds of political pru-

dence, it is not well to make sudden changes of sweeping extent in the depositories of political power. I do not think that we are now called upon by any overruling or any sufficient consideration, under the circumstances, to give over the majority of town constituencies into the hands of the working class. We propose, therefore, to take the figure next above that which I have named—namely, a clear annual value not of 6*l.*, but of 7*l.*

I will now give the House the exact numerical result, so far as we can distinctly make it out, of the proposal to fix the borough franchise at a clear annual value of 7*l.*. The figure of 7*l.* rental is not very far from the standard apparently fixed by the Small Tenements Rating Act; but the result as to admission will be considerably larger. If Gentlemen will take the pains to add together from page 54 of the Statistical Volume the gross total of the male occupiers at 7*l.*, and under 10*l.*, and will then make a Rule of Three sum, having for its first two terms the gross number of occupiers above 10*l.*, and the present number of the 10*l.* constituency, and for its third term the gross number of occupiers between 7*l.* and 10*l.*, the fourth term will give the probable addition to the constituency upon reducing the franchise to 7*l.* [*Laughter from the Opposition Members.*] I hold it a good omen that these studies in arithmetic prove so amusing, as they are generally thought to be among the drier class of subjects. But the result is that the figure is 156,000 persons. [An honourable MEMBER: The gross number?] No, the net number. The gross number will be between 207,000 and 208,000; and even from the net number a deduction must be made of a certain number of freemen whom it includes, and who have already the franchise. I take

off from the 156,000 one-third of the total number of freemen now enjoying the franchise, and that leaves 144,000 as the probable number of persons who would be enfranchised by the reduction from 10*l.* to a clear annual rental of 7*l.*

But it is right I should point out the causes by which, in the view of some persons, this calculation may be modified. There are some persons living in houses between 7*l.* and 10*l.*, who do not belong to the working classes. The number of these, so far as our inquiries extend, is probably small. I incline to believe that 5 per cent. would be an over-statement of the amount, and it is needless to take into view the reduction of the total by this number, which may be balanced from other sources. Then, again, there must be a deduction, some would say a considerable deduction, made on account of the more frequent removals which take place among the holders of small houses. But, on the other hand, an increase will have to be made, in allowance for the effect likely to be produced by the abolition of the rate-paying clauses on that class of persons. The Rule of Three sum is affected by all the causes I have named, including the abolition of the ratepaying clauses, and the operation of the new provisions we propose to make for compound householders: also there would be some small addition to be made for the Savings-bank franchise. I do not for myself attach any very great consequence to the general upshot of these various modifying circumstances. They may, I think, be taken, on the whole, as balancing one another; and, desiring to avoid all minor points of controversy, I should say that the addition to the working class voters by the reduction to 7*l.* would be about 144,000.

And, Sir, I wish to point out to those who may still think that this addition to the constituency ought not to take place, that all are disposed to admit that the franchise ought to be at the least attainable by the working man. I think that the most extreme speeches heard in this House in opposition to change are of this character. They all state that it is desirable that the working man should be able to reach the franchise. That, of course, means that he should be able to reach it by means of such efforts as it is really within his power to make. Now let us consider his present position with regard to the 10*l.* franchise. Ten pounds of clear annual value, when we make the proper addition for rates, taxes, and furniture, must imply that the man is at a charge for his residence annually of not less than 16*l.* I am safe, I may even claim that I speak with moderation, when I say that the working man does not, as a general rule, spend more than one-sixth of his income on his house. Therefore, in order that he may have a 10*l.* house, his average income must be 96*l.*; or, in other words, without making any allowance whatever for sickness and casual interruption of work, he must receive, at least, 1*l.* 17*s.* per week, or, if we allow for necessary breaks, perhaps about 2*l.* per week. Now, Sir, it is plain that only a very small portion of the working classes can hope to receive 2*l.* per week as the wages of their labour. Many an able, industrious, and skilful workman, using his best exertions all his lifetime, would and must fail to attain to such an income. Accordingly, I do not think that a 10*l.* franchise can in the fair meaning of the word be said to be within the reach of the working man. A 7*l.* franchise would work in a different manner. Adding 60 per cent., as in the other case, for rates and furniture, to the sum of 7*l.*, it

would come in the gross to 11*l.* 4*s.*, which would represent an income of 67*l.* 4*s.*, or, instead of 37*s.* per week, a little under 26*s.* a week. Now, 26*s.* a week is an income which is undoubtedly unattainable by the peasantry or mere hand labourer, except under very favourable circumstances, but it is also an income very generally attainable by the artizans and skilled labourers of our towns, though perhaps not so easily in the country.

I will now, Sir, endeavour to give a general and combined view of the figures in this case, in order that they may be placed clearly as a whole before the House. In the counties, as I have said, if our Bill shall become law, the working classes will form a much smaller proportion of the whole constituency than they now are; inasmuch as the 40*s.* freeholders, among whom they are to be found, will form a smaller proportion of the aggregate number, and I can hardly reckon the agricultural tenant at 14*l.* rent as belonging to the class of working men, for the purposes of the present discussion. In the towns, the voters of the classes, other than the working classes, amount to 362,000. The working class, as it appears, has now 126,000 persons, and there will be new electors of the working class, for houses above the line of 10*l.*, amounting to 60,000; while for those below the line of 10*l.*, so far as we can calculate, there will be 144,000, bringing the entire number of the working classes in the constituency to 330,000; or, making a total addition of 204,000 to the 126,000 now included in the constituency. The total enfranchisement contemplated in counties is, by the 14*l.* occupation, 172,000, to which, however, is to be added whatever may be thought fit for copyholders and leaseholders having their qualifications within represented towns, and for the Savings-bank franchise.

Again, as in towns there will be an addition of 204,000 persons, we are likely to have a total addition of 376,000, so far as we may venture to offer definite figures on this subject. With respect to the lodger franchise, to the copyhold and leasehold franchise for counties, and to the Savings-bank franchise, we may perhaps be safe in throwing in the 24,000 which are necessary to make up the next round number, and in stating that the total enfranchisement will probably embrace 400,000 persons; of whom, speaking very roughly, one-half will belong to the working class, and the other half to the middle class; including among the latter, in the counties, many persons of education, although, perhaps, not many of great means or station.

And now as to the proportion which the new constituency will bear to the total number of our householders. There appears to be in our towns a population of 9,326,000. Of these the adult males may, I presume, be taken at 2,331,000; and the adult male occupiers appear from the returns to be 1,647,000. Of occupiers, occupying houses at and over 7*l.*, there are 847,000. The actual constituency of 488,000 represents 30 per cent. of the whole number of male occupiers. The proposed constituency of 692,000 would represent 51 per cent. of those male occupiers, and of the working classes there would be in the towns, according to these figures, 330,000 enfranchised against 588,000 unenfranchised, being less than two in five, but more than one in three, of the whole number belonging to the working classes.

Again, Sir, the gross constituency of the whole country will stand thus. There are already, taking the gross numbers, 550,000 voters in the counties of England and Wales. There are likewise 488,000 in towns; making a

total of 1,038,000. But in order to know the actual number of persons possessed of the suffrage, a very large deduction must be made for those who possess a plurality of votes. I cannot think that, even upon the most liberal estimate, the present constituency can be held to consist of more than 900,000 electors. In addition to those we propose to bring in 400,000, making for England and Wales a total constituency of 1,300,000. The total number of adult males may be nearly 5,300,000; so that the whole number enfranchised in town and country would be one in four, as nearly as possible.

So much for the figures. I do not know whether the House would like me to recapitulate very shortly the legislative proposals which form the basis of them.

The first is to create an occupation franchise in counties, for houses alone or houses with land, beginning at 14*l.* rental, and reaching up to the present occupation franchise of 50*l.* The second is, to introduce into counties the provision, that copyholders and leaseholders within Parliamentary boroughs shall be put upon the same footing as freeholders in Parliamentary boroughs now stand upon for the purpose of county voting, without any alteration in the relative amounts of qualification for household and copyhold as compared with freehold. The third is a Savings-bank franchise, which will operate in both counties and towns, but which may, we think, have the more sensible operation in the counties. In towns, we propose, first, to place compound householders on the same footing as ratepaying householders. We propose next to abolish the tax and ratepaying clauses. We propose also to reduce 10*l.* clear annual value to 7*l.* clear annual value; and to bring in the gross estimated rental taken from the rate-book as the ordinary or presumptive

measure of the value; thus, *pro tanto*, making the rate-book the register. We propose, further, to introduce a franchise on behalf of lodgers, which will comprehend both those persons holding part of a house with separate and independent access, and those who hold part of a house as inmates of the family of another person. The qualification for the suffrage in these classes will be the 10*l.* clear annual value of apartments, without reference to furniture. We propose to abolish the necessity, in the case of registered voters, for residence at the time of voting. And, lastly—I say lastly because, though there are some other minor provisions, I do not think it needful to trouble the House with them at the present time—we propose to follow the example set us by the right honourable Gentleman opposite and the Government of Lord Derby in 1859; and, sustained and supported I must say by many great authorities, to introduce a clause disabling from voting persons who are employed in the Government Dockyards, while they continue to be so employed.

Sir, I have detained the House very long in this explanation; and I have now briefly to consider what is the true representation to be made of such a plan as that which we now submit. It certainly makes a large addition to the constituency. The number of persons who will be enfranchised by this Bill, not upon an estimate wholly vague, but taken on the basis, as far as may be, of the positive and absolute figures which we have been enabled to present, will, I think, certainly be greater than the number of those who were enfranchised by the Reform Act; for no estimate of the enfranchisement effected by the Reform Act would carry it very greatly beyond 300,000 persons. As respects the county

vote, we do not apprehend that our Bill will raise on the floor of Parliament any broad question of principle. As regards the borough vote, we hope that our plan is a liberal, as we believe and are sure that it is a moderate and a safe plan. It alters greatly in towns the balance as between the working classes, defined in the liberal manner which I have stated, and the classes above them; and yet it does not give the absolute majority in the town constituencies to the working classes. It is probable that, according to the various tempers of men's minds, we shall be told that we have done too little, or that we have done too much. Our answer is, that we have done our best. We have endeavoured to take account of the state and condition of the country, as well as of the qualifications which the people possess for the exercise of the political franchise. We are mindful that unhappily the limbo of abortive creations is peopled with the skeletons of Reform Bills. We do not wish to add to the number already registered of unfortunate miscarriages. We may have erred; but we have endeavoured to see how much good, by the measure which we propose, we have a prospect of effecting for the country. As to the completeness of the measure, I have stated to the House what I think are the clear and distinct objects, which any Government attempting to deal with the question of the representation of the people must have in view; but honesty of purpose equally compels us upon careful examination of the facts not to attempt, by any measure that we could lay on the table of the House at this given moment, that which we know to be impracticable, and in which, therefore, we must fail. If we are told that, with respect to the franchise itself, we ought to have

done more, our answer is that it was our duty to take into view the public sentiment of the country, disposed, as we believe, to moderate changes, but sensible of the value of what it possesses, and sensitive with regard to bringing what it possesses into hazard. And, whatever may be the opinion entertained of the growing capacity and intelligence of the working classes, and of their admirable performance at least of their duties towards their superiors—for it has ever appeared to me that, though they have sins, in common with us all, yet their sins are chiefly, and in a peculiar sense, sins against themselves—it is true of the working classes notwithstanding, as it is true of any and every class, that it is a dangerous temptation to human nature to be suddenly invested with preponderating power. That is the reason which causes me to think we have not done too little in the way of enfranchisement. We may be told, on the other hand, that we have done too much. I yet hope that such an objection may not be urged. We do not entirely abandon the expectation that even those who have protested, who have almost protested in principle, against the extension of the franchise downwards, will be disposed to accept a measure which they may not wholly approve, if they think it offers the promise of the settlement for a considerable period of a grave, important, complex, and difficult subject. I would beg them to consider, what an immense value there is in the extension of the franchise for its own sake. Liberty is a thing which is good not merely in its fruits, but in itself. This is what we constantly say in regard to English legislation; when we are told that many descriptions of affairs are managed more economically, more cleverly, more effectually in foreign countries,

"Yes," we answer; "but here they are managed freely; and in freedom, in the free discharge of political duties, there is an immense power both of discipline and of education for the people." But, Sir, if unhappily issue is to be taken adversely upon this Bill, I hope it will be above all a plain and direct issue. I trust it will be taken upon the question whether there is or is not to be an enfranchisement downwards, if it is to be taken at all. We have felt that to carry enfranchisement below the present line was essential: essential to character, essential to credit, essential to usefulness; essential to the character and credit not merely of the existing Government; not merely of the political party by which it has the honour to be regarded with favour; but of this House, and of the successive Parliaments and Governments, who all stand pledged with respect to this question of the representation.

We, Sir, cannot consent to look upon this proposed addition, considerable although it may be, to the political power of the working classes of this country, as if it were an addition fraught with mischief and with danger. We cannot look, and we hope no man will look, upon it as upon some Trojan horse, approaching the walls of the sacred city, and filled with armed men, bent upon ruin, plunder, and conflagration. We cannot join in comparing it with that *monstrum infelix;* we cannot say, we trust that none will say,—

"—— Scandit fatalis machina muros,
Fœta armis: mediæque minans illabitur urbi."

I believe that those persons, whom we ask you to enfranchise, ought rather to be welcomed, as you would welcome recruits to your army, or children to your

family. We ask you to give, within what you may consider to be the just limits of prudence and circumspection; but, having once determined those limits, to give with an ungrudging hand. Consider what you can safely and justly afford to do in admitting new subjects and citizens within the pale of the Parliamentary Constitution; and, having so considered it, do not, I beseech you, perform the act as if you were compounding with danger and misfortune. Do it as if you were conferring a boon, that will be felt and reciprocated in grateful attachment. Give to these persons new interests in the Constitution; new interests which, by the beneficent processes of the law of nature and of Providence, shall beget in them new attachment; for the attachment of the people to the Throne, the institutions, and the laws under which they live, is, after all, more than gold and silver, and more than fleets and armies, at once the strength, the glory, and the safety of the land.

Motion made and Question proposed,

"That leave be given to bring in a Bill to extend the Right of Voting at Elections of Members of Parliament in England and Wales."

SPEECH IN THE AMPHITHEATRE AT LIVERPOOL, APRIL 6, 1866.

THE RIGHT HON. W. E. GLADSTONE, M.P., said: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, the Resolution which has been read from the chair is a Resolution in support of the Reform Bill introduced by her Majesty's Government; and under these circumstances I hope it is not unnatural either that I should be called upon, or that, being called upon, I should obey the call to support that resolution. The measure, which is now before the House of Commons, has two objects in view. One of them is the improvement of the composition of that House: the other is quite apart from and beyond the improvement of the composition of the House; it is to strengthen the House of Commons itself, and along with the House of Commons every other institution of the country, by marshalling a larger share of the energy, the intelligence, the will, and the character of the people of this country in support of those institutions through the possession of a direct share in political franchises. Now, gentlemen, first with reference to the constitution of the House of Commons. One method in which you may improve its constitution, or at least its composition, is, I will venture to say, by sending back among us my respected friend, our President for to-night, Mr. Ewart. That is not the only nor the widest improvement, which I anticipate in its constitution from the passing of our Bill. But I entirely decline to stake the fortunes of that Bill upon any supposed necessity

of bringing, in the first instance, an indictment against the Parliament as it now stands. That, gentlemen, is one of the errors committed, as I think, by the opponents of the Bill. They seem to think that the enfranchisement of the people is an evil in itself so great, that it ought not to be encountered except for the sake of curing some greater evil. And in that view of the matter, they may, not unnaturally, say, if we wish to prove that we are really under an obligation to encounter all those terrific dangers, which must arise from admitting a further portion of the English nation to a share in the government of the country, then, in order to make good our case, we are bound to show at the outset that the present House of Commons is bad and inefficient. Gentlemen, I will attempt no such proof. The present House of Commons, although I believe it may be improved, has for the last five-and-thirty years —nay, I will go further back, and say that for many long years and generations before the Reform Act itself—the free Parliament of England has, upon the whole, done a great and good work for this nation. But that is no reason why we should not seek an enlargement of the constituency of the country. If the Parliament be good, it is no reason why we should not, if we can, make it better still. Why, gentlemen, how would a private individual treat a question affecting his own interests? Suppose a merchant has a flourishing business, with all his arrangements complete, and suppose an opening is made apparent to him by which, increasing his outlay and his ventures, he may, in perfect consonance with the rules of prudence, still more largely increase the profits of his industry and his capital, does that merchant require to have it shown to

him in the first instance that the business he is already doing is a bad one? No, certainly; but he says, "I will make it as good as I can." Does a landowner who has an estate of a thousand pounds a year, who finds that by inclosing or by draining he may make that estate of one thousand a year worth two thousand a year, does he require to have it shown to him that his estate is valueless, that his one thousand a year is not worth having, before he considers or sets about such an improvement? No, certainly, gentlemen; and just in the same way we, believing the Parliament of England to be good, wish to make it better, not only by any change that may take place within its walls, but by strengthening it from without, by one of those considerable additions to its native and essential vigour, which every wisely-framed institution cannot fail to draw from an additional infusion of popular strength. Gentlemen, that is the principle, and that is the basis upon which we wish to approach this question.

And now, our friend, Mr. Jeffery, who last addressed you, referred to the objection, which, as far as I know, is the only even plausible objection that has been made against the present Bill, and that is, that it is what is called an incomplete measure. Gentlemen, symmetry and completeness are very good things; but it is a suspicious circumstance when you find that the persons who are calling for symmetry and completeness —the persons who refuse to be content with anything less than the whole—are the very same persons that detest the part which we have presented to them; and such appears to be the secret of the outcry you now hear. We, gentlemen, have engaged to make known the views which we entertain on the subject—a subject

that must excite, and that ought to excite, great interest in Liverpool—the subject of the redistribution of seats. But knowing those with whom we have to deal, we have likewise said this; before we produce those portions of our plan—before we put into the hands of opponents fresh means of obstruction, by enabling them to use one portion of the scheme so as to make it an obstacle to the other, and to repeat the operation, turn about, as often as they may find it convenient,—before we do that, give us at least a pledge of your general intentions by allowing us to learn your decision on the second reading of this Bill. It is time, gentlemen, to make it clearly understood that, as has been said by Mr. Jeffery, in our judgment the great question, the first question, the cardinal question is, Who are to form the constituency? and depend upon it, when we are well agreed upon the subject who are to form the constituencies, the other difficulties involved in the question of Parliamentary Reform will be found to be, not perhaps few in number, but yet of a comparatively slight and manageable character. It is not, gentlemen, with you, who are friendly to this Bill, and to the extension of suffrage which it proposes, that we shall quarrel, when we come to discuss the subject of redistribution of seats. But pray observe that the subject of redistribution of seats has assumed at this juncture a most fortunate position. It stands high for the moment in the good graces of those who never liked redistribution of seats before, and who, I fear, will continue to retain their liking for it only during a very short time. You will see, gentlemen, that when the views of Government upon the subject shall have been stated, they will be found, in the estimation of that portion of

the community, to whom I refer, to be very unsound views indeed; and in point of fact what will happen will be that, while we have, as they say, committed an unpardonable error, and rendered ourselves guilty in the face of the country, by producing only one half of a Reform Bill, when we come to produce the other half our guilt will be greater still. But, gentlemen, for the present, I will only ask you to believe that, in determining to submit to the present Parliament, during the present session, first and foremost the question of the franchise, whether we have acted rightly or not, we have acted upon careful and deliberate reflection, and we have been prompted only by a sincere and singleminded desire to promote the interests of the common cause. But now, gentlemen, strangely enough, those very persons, or many of them, who complain of us so bitterly for not having produced a broader measure, are, likewise, the very men who complain of us for having produced any measure at all, and whose purpose and desire is not to add to and complete our Bill, but to strangle and destroy it.

And they say, that we give no reasons for the introduction of this measure. Well, gentlemen, in part that is true. This measure, in its substance, considered as a measure of additional enfranchisement, involving a sensible reduction of the suffrage, is a measure which, for fifteen years, has been before the country, and has, during those fifteen years, enjoyed in theory the unquestioning, the general, nay, the nearly unanimous support of every party, and of almost every public man, in the country. Well, now, gentlemen, when Lord Clarence Paget, who appeared at the banquet last night, at the commencement of each Session, proposes the Naval

Estimates in Parliament, he does not begin by proving the necessity of a navy, but he asks for the sums necessary to support it for the year. And we were certainly under the belief that, inasmuch as we were bringing into the House of Commons a proposal which had received in principle a constant and general adhesion for fifteen years from every quarter of the House, it would have been idle to go back to the very first elements of that question, and to spend hours of the time of Parliament in discussing either the general principles of political and civil right, or the expediency of founding upon such general principles some measure for the improvement of our representative system.

But, gentlemen, if we are called upon to assign reasons for our proposal to extend and to reduce the suffrage, there is no difficulty in producing them. The first reason, what we thought was a sufficient reason, what I still believe is a sufficient reason, for an assembly composed, as Parliament is, of men desirous to win the confidence of the people by keeping their word to the people, was the reason that it had been repeatedly, constantly, and deliberately promised. But if that be not enough, it is not difficult to point to many considerations, that show the justice of the introduction of such a proposal at the present time.

Now, gentlemen, if I speak of this Bill as a Bill of which the merits turn especially on the questions connected with the larger enfranchisement of the working class, I do so with reluctance, I do so with pain, and I do so under protest; because, like those who have preceded me, I decline to recognise those distinctions that have been somewhat invidiously, and sometimes even offensively, asserted to exist in this happy country

between class and class; nor has a more important or a more unquestionable truth often been uttered in a public assembly, as I believe, than that which was asserted by Mr. Jeffery, when he said that in this country you never will have any one class combining against any other class or classes of the community, except when smarting under a sense of exclusion, and of injustice as connected with exclusion. But still, for we must meet our opponents on their own ground, I would now ask whether the present adjustment of our electoral laws is altogether fair as respects the working men of this country. Now I raise that issue fairly, and I raise it fearlessly; and mind, the question which we argue, we argue virtually before a tribunal not composed of the working class, but composed in the main under the influence of the upper and of the middle class of this nation. Now, I take, gentlemen, as the ground of my argument, not the numbers of our working men, for, if I took their numbers in any degree into the calculation, I should be overwhelmed with pretentious accusations that any reference to numbers meant democracy, anarchy, mob rule, and I know not what. I will not say, therefore, anything on the subject of numbers; but I will take simply for the moment this test: I will take the income of the working class. Now, I want to know whether the working class of this country is at the present time represented in the constituencies in fair proportion to its income. It is a little difficult, I admit, to get at anything like a precise estimate upon this subject. Yet, still dealing with those figures that are before us, it is not difficult to come near enough to the truth to arrive at an answer to the question that I have put. Now, we know pretty well what is the sum assessed to the income-tax; and the sum assessed to the

income-tax, although it includes a portion of the earnings of the working class, yet for the present I will assume to belong wholly to those who are not of the working class. Well, that sum, gentlemen, is somewhere about three hundred millions a-year. But there is also some portion of income, not charged to the income-tax, which belongs to those not of the working class. Making due allowance for this, and treating the matter roughly, the whole income of those not belonging to the working class may be between three hundred and three hundred and fifty millions. Now, what is the income of the working class? That is still more difficult to reach by an accurate estimate, but it has been made the subject of a very careful and a very interesting inquiry. And I believe it is a moderate estimate, when speaking of the three Kingdoms—and I have spoken of the three Kingdoms in what I have just been saying—it would be a moderate estimate, which should place the aggregate income of the working men in this country at nearer two hundred and fifty millions than two hundred millions. Now, if that be so, it follows that the income of the working class is something like five-twelfths—not very far short of one-half—something near five-twelfths, or three-sevenths, of the whole income of the country. I will take it at three-sevenths, which I do not believe to be in any sense an exaggerated estimate; some, I know, would consider it to be inadequate. That, then, is to say, out of every seven pounds of the income of the country three pounds is received from working men. And the doctrine of those who are pinched and straitened in their views about the suffrage is this: that we ought to look to the representation of property. But here I must refer to the difference between property and income. It is from

income, and not from fixed property, that we chiefly raise monies for carrying on the Government. I say it is to income we should look, if we are to act upon the principles of our opponents, in order to ascertain, as between classes, the true weight of claims on the ground of pecuniary interest to share in the representation of the country. Well, we have found that three-sevenths of the whole income of the country belong to the working class. What is their proportion of the representation? We have produced figures which show, that the number of the working class now enjoying the borough franchise is one hundred and twenty-five thousand, besides what may be called in comparison a handful of the working class enjoying the county franchise in England by the forty-shilling freehold. But this is not all. Much has been said on the subject of these figures. It has been said that we adopted a very large and liberal definition of a working man, and that, if we had taken a stricter definition, a much smaller number would appear to have been entitled. That is perfectly true. But we have taken a large and liberal definition, and, proceeding upon that large and liberal definition, that is to say, stating the case as much as we can in favour of the opponent, we find that possibly between counties and boroughs there may be one hundred and fifty thousand, or something more than one hundred and fifty thousand, working men enjoying the franchise in England and Wales. What is the whole number of voters of the constituency in England and Wales? In round numbers it is about one million and fifty thousand; so that, while the working people of England and Wales appear to have three-sevenths of the income, they have somewhere about one-seventh of the votes.

And again, gentlemen, were I, instead of looking to the income, to look to the taxation paid by the working community of the country, the case would come out in very nearly the same form. It is indeed a matter of discussion, not admitting of accurate settlement, what proportion of our indirect taxes in particular is paid by the different classes of the community. But undoubtedly in my opinion—and from considerable experience in the office I now hold I have had some means of judging—undoubtedly not less than one-third, probably a good deal more than one-third, of the sixty-eight millions at which our revenue now stands, is contributed by the working population of this country. My belief is that the working man pays taxes in as high a proportion to his income as is borne by the wealthier classes. But the case is so strong that it leaves a margin. And I need only say that if from two-sevenths to three-sevenths, and it is nearer three-sevenths than two, of the taxation of the country is contributed by the working men, and if we are told that the franchise (not to take numbers into view at all) is to depend upon property, I ask with what justice it is that we can ask the working population to pay us from two-sevenths to three-sevenths of the taxation, and to pay them in return with the inadequate, nay the miserable fraction of one-seventh of the representation? Well now, gentlemen, I think that these are reasons—and there is no difficulty in finding reasons, as our opponents are so fond of reasons—to justify the moderate scheme that we have laid before Parliament.

I will now, gentlemen, refer to another point. I will draw another reason from a comparison between that which now is, and that which was in the year 1832. According to the figures I have spoken of, the working

class at this moment consists of about twenty-six per cent., not of the constituency at large, but of the borough constituency of England. According to what would probably be an estimate nearer the strict truth, they constitute about twenty-one per cent., or a little over one-fifth. Now it is matter of much interest to inquire, how stood this matter in 1832? In 1832 the working classes constituted no less than thirty-one per cent. of the constituency; so that the proportion which we are endeavouring to modify, and which we are so much blamed for the endeavour to modify, that proportion has been since 1832 not an increasing but a diminishing proportion. Gentlemen, is that just? Changes have taken place since 1832. Has the relative position of the working classes improved, or has it been deteriorated? None can doubt that it has been greatly improved. Not the most superficial observer could survey the condition of England in 1832, and again in 1866, without perceiving that, in everything that relates to social duty and to capacity for the enjoyment of political privilege, the working class has made enormous advances.

I am far from saying that they have nothing yet to learn; they have much to learn, gentlemen, and much to learn have we all. But look at all the points upon which that capacity and that fitness for duty and for privilege depend. And who is there that can for a moment doubt that the time has come, when, instead of a diminishing and a dwindling, we ought to have, I am far from desiring to say an overwhelming, but yet a growing and extending proportion of the working class in the constituency? Now, was there ever a time in the history of our country known to us when all improving agencies have been so busy? Look at the

agency of the ministers of religion. Look, to begin with, at the clergy of the Established Church. Why, gentlemen, a generation ago—one can feel now no delicacy in avowing it—the clergy were as a body a lethargic clergy, although with many and honourable exceptions; but still in its main they were a body of men whose eyes were not sufficiently lifted above the level of human things towards the eternal and the imperishable objects that it is their duty especially not only to regard for themselves, but to present to their countryman. What are they now? No man will for one moment withhold from the clergy of the national Church at this moment —no man, I am persuaded, will think of withholding the praise, whether he agrees with them, or whether he differs from them—that they are a body of men honestly and earnestly devoted to their high calling. The very same things which I say of their activity and devotion at this time I believe may be said with equal truth of the activity and the devotion of the ministers of every other Church and persuasion among us. Nor do I speak of the teaching office in connection with religious bodies only. The same has been the case with the schools. Look at the vast extension of education; and look at all that has been done by the State. The State—I have not put the figures together, but I believe I should not exaggerate the sum were I to say that from ten, nay, probably fifteen, possibly not far from twenty millions have been spent by the State during the past five-and-thirty years, in modes and through channels wholly new, for the promotion and extension of education; and likewise take into your view, that the spending of this large sum of money has been the means of eliciting from private sources the expenditure of a much larger sum. Now,

what has all this process been but the erection of a vast machinery for the moral, as well as the intellectual, improvement and elevation of the mass of the community? But we have to regard not the school and the Church only. Look likewise at the press. Now, what has the State done in that matter? And it is most important for us to keep in view this department of the subject; because what is done by the State is done deliberately, done by public authority, and done so as to express the general judgment of the nation. Why, the State, gentlemen, has surrendered within the last twenty or twenty-five years more than two millions—I think, perhaps, nearly two millions and a half—of revenue, upon the different heads of the paper duty, of the newspaper stamp, and of the advertisement duty, for the sake of supplying an easier access to knowledge on behalf of the masses of the community easier: access to knowledge, but more particularly easier access to that knowledge, which is social and political. And, therefore, in every department of human nature, with regard to what is spiritual, with regard to what is moral, with regard to what is intellectual, with regard to what is political, we have, for a whole generation of man, been engaged with one consent in endeavouring to increase the capacity of the mass of the community for the discharge of public duty. And can there be anything more absurd than, after having participated in these operations, after having pushed them to the utmost of our power, after having used every means to procure, and to promote and stimulate to the uttermost, that kind of improvement, after having elevated in that way, as Parliament aided by other agencies has elevated, the working class and the mass of the community, to turn round upon the very work we have

ourselves performed, to refuse to it its natural consummation, and to say, we admit your increased fitness; we admit your increased intelligence; we have done all we could to help it on, and we will do all we can to help it on hereafter; yet, take notice, we will still deny to you that public and legal recognition to which by fitness you are entitled, in the shape of any increased possession of the franchise, and in the shape of power to participate in making the laws for the government of the country?

Why, gentlemen, it is hardly to be expected that objections so unreasonable, though they may have been brought out into the light of day, can endure the test of prolonged discussion. I am glad, gentlemen, on many grounds to meet you here to-night. But I am glad especially, because it is, to a great extent, in these great assemblies of our fellow-countrymen that the opinions and sentiments are formed, which become ultimately the guides of the public mind and public policy. And I would that those who say there is no sentiment in the country favourable to the passing of the measure of the Government could be present among us to-night, and judge for themselves. Gentlemen, it is not violence, it is not a love of innovation, it is not a pedantic view of what is necessary to vindicate our own consistency, that brings us forward as a Government in connection with this important measure; it is the deep conviction that we are endeavouring to assist in the payment of a debt which not only honour, but justice and policy, all combine to recognise as due to the people of this country. Have those, who object to these proceedings, considered the real amount of the change that has passed upon the mind and temper, as well as the condition, of this community within the last five-and-thirty years? Do they really

look back to what was the condition of the peasantry thirty-five years ago, under the operation of the poor-law as it then existed? Do they look back to the petition which was signed, at least which purported to be signed, by three millions of men, and which was signed at any rate by an enormous and almost inconceivable number, praying for radical and fundamental changes, and evidently indicating the general unsettledness, if not discontent of mind, which, at a time somewhat later, rankled in the breasts of the masses of the community? Less than thirty years ago such was the state of facts. But who could get up such a petition now? But if there is content, if there is intelligence, if there is fitness, is it not then our business to take advantage of the existence of those qualities, of those favouring circumstances, and to rally them all and turn them to the best account by giving to greater numbers a positive interest, a direct share, in the conduct of the Government on behalf of the institutions of the country?

Why, gentlemen, at the period to which I refer, the sore, the uneasy state of the public mind, I mean in the minds of the masses of the community, indicated itself in ten thousand forms. I will not go back to the manifestations of violence which occurred in times that some of us can recollect. I will not go back to those unhappy and deplorable collisions of authority with assemblages of the people, that now raise a blush upon the cheek of Englishmen; but I will speak of other things. I will speak by way of example of one that is familiar. At that time there was a kind of popular charm attaching to parodies of well-known and very sacred and solemn documents of our religion; which, with their well-understood forms of expression, in order

to meet popular favour, were twisted into a sense adapted to express the wants and sufferings of the people. Well, gentlemen, it happened to me not long ago, in an humble street in London, to hear a couple of men singing, or trying to sing, a parody of that kind. It was a parody on the Church Service in the Prayer Book, and all the addresses and expressions were altered so as to refer to a great supposed misery and misgovernment of the people. This was within the last few months. I had the curiosity to wait near those persons for some length of time in order to see what took place. They were successful in gathering around them a group, which appeared to vary between six and twelve in number, composed of boys and girls; and those boys and girls, I am bound to say, thereby testifying to the improved condition of the working classes, did produce various pennies and half-pennies, with which they purchased copies of those wonderful productions. But my curiosity was to see what testimonies of the popular interest they would elicit from adult working men. It was about the time—about six o'clock in the evening—when they were going home from their work, and they passed by, to and fro. I saw but one person, of an age to receive wages as a working man, stop near this group, and having listened for about half a minute, he went on with evident indications of contempt. And that is a symptom, slight perhaps but trustworthy, of the sort of change that has been produced in the mind of the mass of the community. It is not a solitary symptom; and the importance of those symptoms would be much misunderstood, if they were taken as anything but indications of a wide-spread—I will venture to say, of an almost all-comprehending change; indeed it is that change, and the improved and constantly increasing capacity, that, as we say,

constitutes not only the fitness, but, in a moral sense, constitutes as I affirm a right, a right on behalf of the people, to expect at the hands of the legislature not a sweeping or violent, but a fair and reasonable extension of the franchise.

But, gentlemen, it appears to me that, when the matter is well weighed and examined, the real difference between us and those who oppose this Bill turns out to be really no less than this, that, as I have said, they regard every demand for a concession of increased political privilege to their fellow countrymen as an evil —an evil that they would face, perhaps, in order to avoid greater evils, such as the burning of their houses over their heads; but it is a change, which they are not prepared to recognise as being in itself anything but more or less an evil, and hence it is that we have those extraordinary demands to know how many, how many exactly, will there be of voters from the working class in this town and in that. It reminds me very much, gentlemen, of what took place about the time of the repeal of the corn-laws, when the admission of corn from abroad was regarded as a tremendous evil, and it was asked with a jealous, feverish, and scrutinising curiosity, how many quarters of corn would come from America; how many quarters from Russia; how many there would be from Odessa; how many from the Baltic; and we were told that there would be a deluge, an inundation of foreign corn; and this awful mischief of an undue augmentation of the quantity of food available for the support of the people was regarded with a perfectly sincere, and real, and true, but, as we now all know, a most ridiculous and even in itself contemptible apprehension. Very ridiculous were the errors into which men were betrayed by that temper. Possibly you

may even recollect that one of the most distinguished among the opponents of the repeal of the corn-laws, who is also one of the most distinguished opponents of the Bill now in Parliament, made the discovery that there was a place in Russia called Tamboff, and from that place it was credibly reported, and he had reason to believe, that there could be imported at a very low price into this country per annum about thirty-six millions of quarters of corn. Well, apprehensions just about as reasonable are now entertained. For my own part, I stated in the House of Commons, I stated as a kind of challenge, hoping that it would be repelled with energy and even with indignation on the opposite side of the House, with reference to some gentlemen who had been remarking upon this subject,—I said, "You seem to dread the working men about to be admitted to the constituency as if they were an invading army." To my great astonishment, I must add to my great pain, that imputation of mine, which I had hoped would be indignantly repelled, appeared, by cheers from various quarters, to be warmly accepted as a perfectly true description of the view that was taken of a measure of popular enfranchisement. Well, gentlemen, is this so, or is it not? Is it true that in a free country, that in a Christian country, in a country that hopes it is somewhere not far from the very head of Christian civilisation, eighteen hundred years after our Lord illuminated the world with His presence, and blessed it with His teaching and example,—is it really true that what we have come to after so long enjoyment of the light, after such progress through scores of generations, is only this, that the best we can look for in happy, free old England, is to see gathered together a small and privileged class

within the fortified precincts of what we call the Constitution, and outside of it the huge toiling masses of the community, who are to be regarded, if they come near the door, if even a moderate share of them become candidates for admission, as an invading army? Gentlemen, I must say that life would be scarcely worth having, and certainly the institutions, for which we are so thankful, would be a cause of shame and disgrace to us rather than of glory, if such was their character, and if such had been their result. Why, what do we mean, gentlemen, when we make our boast, as Englishmen, of the local government and the self-government that have so long prevailed in this country? Is that self-government, is the parochial government, is the municipal government in this country a good or an evil? (Several voices —"A good.") If it is a good, why is it a good? because it is an instrument of practical education to those who partake in it. But if the giving of your vote for the concerns of the parish, and for the concerns of the borough, is an instrument of practical education, I ask, is it not a yet more powerful instrument, and a yet higher and nobler education, to be admitted also to give your voice in the selection of men who are to make the laws under which they live.

But again, gentlemen, what is the case with respect to those who may be generally described as the upper classes of this country? Did they at once jump into fitness for the exercise of political power? Did they, at a moment's notice, adapt themselves to the workings of a constitutional system? Most certainly not. Our constitutional system in its present form, though not in its original elements, is considered to date from a period not yet quite two hundred years old, namely, from the

Revolution of 1688. But for several generations after that revolution, how was parliamentary government in this country carried on? Undoubtedly by means of corruption, in a great degree by gross corruption, though not so much corruption of the constituencies as corruption of the Parliament itself: of that very upper class, whose present capacity for political duty we all admit, and whose upright discharge of it we have now so generally to admire. But if it has taken time to apply a remedy to those evils, and if, with time, a remedy has been applied, is not that a proof of the educating power of political privileges, of the political franchise? And if such has been the result of the enjoyment of that power by certain classes of the community, why are we not to believe that the very same human nature in other classes will in its degree receive analogous benefits from an analogous discipline? why are we not to believe that it is, in point of fact, a proof not only that we are to seek fitness in the people before we admit them to the franchise, but that we are to look to the use of the franchise itself for the purpose of increasing and of perfecting that fitness?

Gentlemen, I must say there is one institution of this country which has assumed a form thoroughly national, although it is among the most recent—it is, in fact, the most recent of all our institutions—and of which we may say that it illustrates the manner in which national strength is augmented by the extension of political privilege, from time to time, and within the rules of prudence and of safety, to augmented numbers of the people. I refer, gentlemen, to the Volunteer movement. You will judge whether I am wrong in my opinion. It may sound at the first moment like a

paradox if I connect the Volunteer movement with the Reform Act. The Volunteer movement has been essentially, in the main, a movement of the middle classes of this country. The great bulk of the members of that force are members of the middle class; are members of that very class, which was enfranchised by the Reform Act. I do not doubt that at any moment, under the pressure of immediate danger, Englishmen would have rallied round the vital interests of their country, and would at the call of duty have given their lives on its behalf; but I do not believe that forty years ago it would have been possible to institute anything like what we have seen in the Volunteer movement. I am not sure that the voluntary arming, which took place at the beginning of this century, went so far down in society as this has done. But even if it did, that was a movement with the enemy at our gates: this was one, which, if it commenced in a period of some vague uneasiness, has grown and thriven since amidst conscious and entire security. I believe that this movement is an indirect, but at the same time a perfectly true and legitimate, result of the manner in which the middle class of this country has in recent times come to be immediately and intimately associated with the working of our institutions. They have felt more than ever that they have an interest, a share, a property, in these institutions; and they have shown their readiness to give both time, and money, and care, and attention, for the purpose of adding to the strength of the country, even apart from any apprehension of immediate danger, for, thank God! no such apprehension does or need trouble our minds.

But, gentlemen, there is another illustration of the effect of extended franchises: and I cannot refrain from

mentioning it, although it is possible that it may expose me or others to misunderstanding—I mean the illustration afforded by the civil war in America. Now, about five or six years ago, when the subject of Parliamentary Reform was under discussion, it was a popular and a fashionable practice to speak of the institutions of America as a sheer failure, and formal orations were delivered in the House of Commons, setting forth that supposed failure as a warning to this nation, and making use of those institutions as a bugbear, to terrify and frighten us from proceeding in the path of liberal policy, to induce us to withhold our confidence from our countrymen, and to insist upon retaining the narrow limit of the present constituency. Gentlemen, what has taken place since that time? I am not about to deliver a general lecture upon the civil war in America. I am not about to draw any invidious distinction, or any distinction at all, between one section and the other section of that great community. For my part, gentlemen, my earnest and devout aspiration has long been and is—and I believe that such is the aspiration and desire of Englishmen at large—for the welfare of that nation, in every part and portion of it—whether it be white or black, and whether it be in the North or in the South. Neither, gentlemen, am I going to hold up American institutions as institutions to be preferred to our own; but what I am going to do is this. I think it is our business, as men of sense, to draw lessons from the experience of America, and from facts that come under our view, whether they be in a despotic country, whether they be in a constitutional country, or whether they be in countries that are republican or democratic. The

point I ask you to observe is this; not the comparative merits of English and American institutions at large, but one single and important point, I mean the effect that has been produced in America by a largely extended popular franchise, and a widely spread participation on the part of the people in the choice of their governors; the wonderful, the unexampled, the almost incredible effect that has been produced by that system in giving forcible expression to the national will, and in enabling a Government to develope energies for the purpose of giving effect to that will such as probably have never been developed, in an equal time and among an equal number of men, since the race of mankind began to exist. Only consider the facts: consider what has been done by thirty millions of people. But I had better not include the negro population, who can hardly be said to have entered as a distinct party into the struggle, thankful as we may be for the effect it has had ultimately upon their destinies. Let us consider, then, that some twenty-five or twenty-six millions of people, twenty millions in the majority, and six in the minority, when they came to the bloody issue of war upon a matter which on the one side and on the other was held vital, have, as in common justice we are bound to admit, developed an amount of heroism, a power of self-sacrifice, an energy, a perseverance, a forgetfulness of every personal interest, and have marshalled an amount of actual force, and expended an amount of treasure, in support of their chosen rulers on the one side and on the other, such as I know not where to seek for in the annals of the history of the world. Well, gentlemen, what I would say is this,—let us learn lessons where we can; and among

others let us learn them not least readily where we can learn them from our kinsfolk, from the children of our loins in America.

The position of England, gentlemen, is a peculiar position in the world. England has inherited from bygone ages more perhaps of what was august and venerable in those ages than any other European country; and at the same time that her traditions of the past are so rich and fruitful that our minds and all our characters have, both within our knowledge and beyond our knowledge, been largely moulded by them, she has likewise been exposed in the highest possible degree to the sifting and stimulating power of every modern influence, which the nineteenth century has brought into activity. As geographically she stands with Europe on one side of her and America on the other, so she stands between those feudal institutions on the one side under which European States were formed, and which have given to England her hierarchy of classes, and on the other side, those principles of equality which form the base of society in the United States. What in these circumstances is the course which duty and prudence mark out for us? Surely it is this. It is the business of England not, by a servile imitation of the one or the other, to disown her own glorious and most characteristic history, but, on the contrary, to cherish everything she has inherited, and to improve it, but to improve it for the sake of preserving it. And further: it is her duty, while she looks fondly upon the past, to learn likewise from the present; and if the recent events which have taken place on the other side of the Atlantic have demonstrated to us how, by enlarged franchises, augmented power can be marshalled on behalf of Go-

vernment, and increased energy and power be given to the nation as a nation, why, then, gentlemen, I say, without incurring needless risk, without forgetfulness of the rules of prudence and circumspection, and recollecting that the application of principles of public policy is ever subject to the control of circumstance, I think we ought, with a firm determination, to observe, to record, to appropriate all the lessons which may be so gathered from the experiences of the other portions of the human family.

Gentlemen, it is sometimes said that the measure we propose is a democratic measure. The word democracy has very different senses. If by democracy be meant liberty, if by democracy be meant a progressive extension to each man in his own sphere of every privilege and of every franchise he can exercise with advantage to himself and with safety to the State, why, then, I must confess I do not see much to alarm us in the word democracy. But if by democracy is meant the enthroning of ignorance as against knowledge, the setting up of vice in opposition to virtue, disregard of established distinctions of rank, forgetfulness of what our fathers have done for us, indifference or coldness to the grandeur of the inheritance we enjoy, then, gentlemen, I for one, and, I believe, all whom I have the honour to address, are in that sense the enemies of democracy. But, gentlemen, in such a sense, this country is not a democratic country. On the contrary, in this country there is a love, deeply rooted and grounded in the public mind, of that arrangement and constitution of society which we have inherited from former times; and I do not believe that of the entire community there is one man in one hundred,

or it may be one thousand, that would disturb it even if he could. There is but one thing that can make this country, from a country aristocratic in its feeling, become a country democratic in its feeling. That day, I think, would be an unhappy day; and I know nothing that could cause such a day to arrive, unless it were a forgetfulness among the British aristocracy that their order has in all times, beyond any aristocracy in the world, been trustful and confiding in its temper towards the people, mild and forbearing in its use of privilege, and ready to furnish leaders for the nation in every cause that belongs to its honour and its liberty. I am sorry whenever for a moment, and even in a particular instance, there may be a disposition to depart from those noble and glorious traditions of the British aristocracy. I am sorry to reflect that at the moment I now speak the immediate danger threatening the measure which the Government has introduced should proceed from names eminent and honoured on the list of that aristocracy. A notice of motion has been given by Lord Grosvenor for the purpose of defeating the Bill of the Government; we are further told—and as the announcement has been publicly made without contradiction, I presume that we are truly told—that the motion is to be seconded by Lord Stanley. I know no two individuals more worthy of respect and honour in the high station which they occupy; but I am bound to say, I think for many reasons that a more deplorable arrangement never was made—to speak in homely phrase, a more gross blunder never was committed—than when in the councils of political party, with that kind of cleverness which so often outwits itself, it was determined that the repre-

sentatives of these two of our noblest and most ancient houses should come forward combinedly for the purpose of resisting and defeating what is an act of grace, but what is likewise, besides being an act of grace, an act of justice, to the great community of England.

Gentlemen, however much we may lament this unhappy instance, I am persuaded that we are not to accept it as an indication that there is likely to be a general and a fundamental change in that wise moderation, which has hitherto, for the most part, distinguished the conduct of the most favoured members of society; of those upon whom the bounties of Providence have been poured in the largest abundance, and who have profited most largely by the labours of their fellow-men.

I do not think, moreover, that the present movement, formidable though it be, is likely to succeed. We, gentlemen, have framed a measure, I think, in the strictest spirit of moderation. We do not desire, nay, we should be among the first to resist, sudden, and violent, and sweeping changes. But a progressive enlargement of the popular franchise, having due regard to the state and circumstances of the country, we consider not to be liable to the application of any of those epithets. Having produced that measure, framed in a spirit of moderation, we hope to support it in a spirit of decision. It is not, gentlemen, in our power to secure the passing of the measure; that rests more with you, and more with those whom you represent, and of whom you are no unworthy sample, than it does with us. Yet still we have a great responsibility; and we are conscious of it; and we do not intend to flinch from it and from what it entails. We stake ourselves, gentlemen, we stake our existence

as a Government, whether it be worth much or whether it be worth little it is not for us to say, but such as it is we stake it, and we stake our political characters, upon the adoption of the Bill in its main provisions. You have a right to expect from us that we shall tell you what we mean. You have a right to ask that the trumpet, which it is our part to blow, shall give no uncertain sound. Its sound, gentlemen, has not hitherto been, and I trust it will not henceforward be, uncertain. We have passed the Rubicon; we have broken the bridge; and we have burnt the boats behind us. We have advisedly cut off from ourselves the means of retreat. And having done this, we hope that, as far as time has yet permitted, we have done our duty to the Crown and to the nation. The rest, gentlemen, is in other hands than ours. And we beseech you, and we beseech all reflecting Englishmen in whose hands, by the well-understood Constitution of this country, the ultimate settlement of these great issues is lodged, to consider what the future is to be. You cannot, I think, doubt, if you consider the workings and the movement of society, that there is on the part of the masses of the community a forward and onward movement; a forward and onward movement perfectly safe and harmless, and not only safe and harmless, but infinitely profitable, if only you deal with it wisely and in time. But read the signs of the period in which we live. The voice that once spake as never man spake rebuked those that were then in authority, because they could not discern the signs of the times. Does any man really suppose that that particular limit which is signified by the figure of ten pounds is to be for ever and from ever, for generation to generation,

the limit within which you are to enjoy, and beyond which every man is to be deprived of the enjoyment of, the franchise? Certainly not. And the defeat of this Bill; what would it procure? An interval indeed, but not an interval of repose, an interval of fever, an interval of expectation, an interval for the working of all causes and all influences which might possibly rise even to the formidable dimensions of political danger. Let this great nation, we adjure it, be wise, and be wise, too, in due season. Let it not, through a dallying indecision, an improvident neglect of an opportunity as favourable, I believe, as ever was offered to a legislature, or through the influence of a weak, or cowardly, sometimes even a selfish apprehension, refuse the granting of a boon which, I am firmly persuaded, if granted now, will be received as a boon in a spirit of grateful affection, and will tend to nothing but an increase of attachment of the people to its laws, its institutions, and its rulers. Let us not convert that which is truly, if we can but see it, for our advantage into an occasion of danger and of evil; but let our countrymen, if they so view the duty of the day and the prospects of the future, rally round us and strengthen us for the task we have in hand; for if they so rally round us, rely upon it, gentlemen, that whatever difficulties be in our way they will be easily and even soon surmounted; and the next time we meet within these now crowded walls it will be to exchange our mutual congratulations upon the passing into law of a great and liberal measure of enfranchisement, and upon the evident fruits it may at once, it is not too much to hope, have begun to produce in the augmented contentment, and love, and loyalty of the people.

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE BILL.

Order for Second Reading read.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: I rise, Sir, to move the second reading of the Representation of the People Bill: And, in doing so, I propose to supply a defect, which some have observed in the statement with which I originally introduced the Bill to the notice of the House. It was thought on my part almost disrespectful to the House—and suggestions of this kind have proceeded from persons of weight and authority—to have laid a measure of so much importance on the table without dealing more largely, than I did presume to deal, in substantive reasons for its introduction. I will hereupon explain briefly to the House the feelings with which that measure was introduced, and which will, I think, explain and justify the course which I pursued.

Her Majesty's Government—for I do not speak on this point for myself alone—Her Majesty's Government have been all along sensible of the tender nature of the ground, on which they were about to tread. They had, first and foremost of all, to apprehend that they might prejudice the progress of this great question, by giving to it unnecessarily, or at all events prematurely, the character of a party conflict within the walls of Parliament. They had also to apprehend that they might incur a still more serious mischief—that they might give to the course of the controversy on the subject the character,

beyond these walls, of a conflict between class and class. They were determined, Sir, that, so far as depended upon them, the discussion should not be marked from its commencement either by the one character or the other. I was therefore earnestly studious—with what success I know not—to thread my way through the whole of that long and, I fear, wearisome address, without including in it any statement of principle, any argument, any suggestion, any reference to the past, of such a nature as could in any manner raise even so much as a flutter of hostile emotion on the part of the gentlemen who sit opposite.

I was not at that period aware of any reason, nay, I am not even yet aware of any good reason, why gentlemen who sit opposite, and who may be disposed to take a temperate and conciliatory view of public affairs, should not freely concur in the enlargement—as we think the very moderate enlargement—of the franchise which we propose. We had framed the measure in what appeared to us a spirit of moderation and restraint. We desired that it should be placed before the House in the same spirit. It was in the effort to give effect to that desire that I omitted many of the topics, which would have exhibited more clearly the breadth of the grounds on which we rest our measure, but which might have neutralised that advantage by bringing too readily into the foreground occasions for sharp conflict of opinion.

I must confess that, when I heard the demand for reasons urged in terms so peremptory, it was not altogether without a touch of surprise at some of the quarters from which it proceeded. Had I been addressing an assembly never before conversant with the

subject, I could have felt no such surprise. But it was somewhat singular that gentlemen, who had themselves heard of Reform, who had themselves supported Reform, who had themselves been responsible for the introduction of Reform, who had themselves in some instances—and this is by far the strongest case of all—endeavoured to force Reform, nay, to force even what are now contemptuously called piecemeal and partial measures of Reform, on a reluctant Government, should come forward and demand reasons why the advisers of the Crown, forsooth, had troubled the mind of Parliament and of the country by the introduction of the question of Reform.

Now, Sir, although I did not enter into reasoning at large, I did refer to authority; nay, I did, in effect, refer to at least two heads of argument; such heads as, under the circumstances, I thought sufficient for the purpose which we had in view. One was, the nature of those remarkable promises which had been given, and which had been repeated more times than one can easily recollect, with respect to the settlement of this question. And in connexion with those promises, I endeavoured to explain the peculiar origin of the question—not from the free and spontaneous choice of the Government, but out of the very mind, the very bosom of Parliament itself. A further head on which I touched was the state of things that now prevails with regard to popular enfranchisement, in the strict sense of the phrase—that is, the enfranchisement of the working class—as compared with what prevailed in 1832, and with the undoubted increase, during the interval, of fitness, on the part of that class, for the exercise of political duty.

Now, with reference to the origin of the question, I

have been challenged in terms of extraordinary boldness. I must, therefore, revert to the point again; and I do so for the sake of stating that the only fault in the explanation I gave was that I understated that case of Parliamentary responsibility, which I sought to establish. In 1851, when this question was first in a serious form introduced to Parliament by my honourable Friend the Member for West Surrey (Mr. Locke King), I stated that, in spite of the opposition of the Government, a majority of two to one voted for the introduction of his Bill for the establishment of an occupation franchise of ten pounds in the counties. But, Sir, what I believe I omitted to state, and what, at any rate, greatly strengthens the case, was this—that the House gave that vote, and expressed that determination in favour of the introduction of the Bill, even after my noble Friend, who was then, as he is now, at the head of the Government, had stated that the Government would give their attention to the subject, and would themselves in the ensuing Session submit a measure of Reform to its consideration. And yet, in the very face, in the very teeth of that pledge, given by my noble Friend, the House of Commons of 1851 took upon itself the responsibility of forcing a vote in favour of the introduction of the Bill. Thus, then, the revival of the Reform question under the authority of the advisers of the Crown was, in a peculiar sense, the wish of Parliament itself.

But I am told that the Bill of 1851 was subsequently thrown out. No doubt; and under what circumstances was it thrown out? The introduction of the Bill was followed by the resignation of Ministers, who would not submit to the judgment of the House, and who at the same time did not think proper to advise a Dissolution.

The attempt of the distinguished leaders of the party opposite to form a Government, based as it was at that period on an intention to propose the reimposition of a fixed duty on corn, entirely failed. In that state of circumstances, the Government came back, by ordinary process, and of necessity, into the hands of my noble Friend; and coming back by necessity into his hands, of course it followed that the House of Commons, which accepted him as Minister, should, in lieu of the measure for which it had pronounced, accept also his pledge with reference to Parliamentary Reform, and should decline to proceed with the Bill of my honourable Friend.

But what did happen, and what was indeed remarkable, was that, under these circumstances, there were some ardent spirits who could not even then desist from their attempt; who divided for the second reading of the Bill, and tried to force it on the Government; and among the gentlemen who were thus anxious to force piecemeal Parliamentary Reform on the Administration was my right honourable Friend the member for Stroud, whom I now find, if I rightly understand him, among the implacable objectors to piecemeal legislation.

At a subsequent period, in 1858, the very same measure was forced on the Government of Lord Derby. On that occasion I voted against the Bill; not because I disapproved of the reduction of the county franchise to ten pounds, for I had myself in 1854, as a Minister, been a willing party to a measure which went to enact it; but because I did not wish to assume the responsibility of forcing it on an Administration, which was not prepared at the time to deal with the question. But, again, my right honourable Friend, hot and ungovernable in his zeal for piecemeal proceedings in the matter

of Reform, endeavoured by his vote to force on the advisers of the Crown the adoption of a measure not only confined to the subject of the franchise, but confined to a special branch of the franchise: a branch of that branch of the question of Reform.

Now, Sir, let us shortly consider who the persons are, who have made to the people of this country the promises of which I venture to remind this House; promises which I think the petitions presented to-day sufficiently demonstrate not to have been forgotten, but to lie recorded in the memory of the people as engagements of which they anticipate, and of which they now ask, the fulfilment. That statement, I perceive, was greeted with something like a jeer from a portion of the House; still, let us consider for a moment who were the men that gave those promises. They were first given by Lord Russell; they were next given by Lord Aberdeen; Lord Palmerston followed in the train; they were afterwards given, last of all, by Lord Derby and the right honourable Gentleman opposite. Now, what was the engagement taken by the right honourable Gentleman, speaking on the part of the Government of which he was the organ? Was it a first fault on the part of that Government? Was it an occasional and incidental slip from the path of virtue, which led them, in an unguarded moment, to promise a measure of enfranchisement, and finally to include in their promise a reduction of the borough franchise? No, Sir, they had time enough to consider their Resolution. The second reading of their Bill was met, as the second reading of our Bill is, we are told, to be met, by a hostile Resolution. It was met by a Resolution which I was not disposed to support, but or which, at any rate, I will say that it was

direct and outspoken in its purpose, and that it gave the country clearly to understand the real motives that were in the minds of its supporters. That Motion was successful. The Bill was arrested. The Parliament was dissolved. The dissolution of the Parliament gave an opportunity to the Government of Lord Derby to consider whether they had been right, or whether they had been wrong, in the introduction of a Bill which refused to deal with the borough franchise; and, upon the assembling of the new Parliament, the right honourable Gentleman opposite announced the deliberate view of his colleagues. On the 7th of June, 1859, he spoke as follows:—

"We are perfectly prepared to deal with that question of the borough franchise and the introduction of the working classes by lowering the franchise in boroughs, and by acting in that direction with sincerity; because, if you intend to admit the working classes to the franchise by lowering the suffrage in boroughs, you must not keep the promise to the ear and break it to the hope. The lowering of the suffrage must be done in a manner which satisfactorily and completely effects your object, and is at the same time consistent with maintaining the institutions of the country." (Opposition cheers.)

I see that you hail with satisfaction the saving clause of "maintaining the institutions of the country." But we do not ask you now to pledge yourselves to sacrifice the institutions of the country. We do not ask you, at this stage of the proceedings on the Bill, to fix this or that particular standard for the lowering of the borough franchise. We may have our own views on the subject, and we have them. We have reduced them to what we

think are the narrow limits of strict moderation. We now ask you, whether you are or are not prepared to act on the principle announced by the right honourable Gentleman opposite, when he said that the Government of Lord Derby, having before it the question whether it was to continue in possession of power or to retire from it, was ready to propose, in some effectual shape, the lowering of the borough franchise?

However, Sir, I will not omit to notice what perhaps honourable Gentlemen opposite may consider important, that at a subsequent period, unless I am much mistaken, the right honourable Gentleman retracted those words. I rather believe, though I cannot give the exact date, that the right honourable Gentleman expressed an unfeigned repentance with regard to the promise he had given. But, Sir, the promise that he gave, he gave while in power; he gave it as a Minister of the Crown. He gave it on the occasion of an appeal to Parliament; a solemn appeal, lodged in order to determine who was worthy to hold power, and who was not worthy to hold it. It was a promise given, I admit, under political pressure, but it was a promise, on that very account, all the more important and more sacred; and if in the ease and leisure of opposition the right honourable Gentleman has retracted it, that is not the first time such things have taken place;

> "Ease will retract
> Vows made in pain as violent and void."

And, Sir, let me not be misunderstood. I do not doubt that the right honourable Gentleman had a perfect right to make the promise, or that he had a perfect right to retract it. It is not for me to question his discretion

in the one step, nor do I intend to question it in the other. But let not the right honourable Gentleman suppose, and let not any member of his party suppose, that the retractation of pledges, once given by a minister of the Crown, can make those pledges to be as though they had never been given. They can never be effaced from the record of time; they can never be cancelled in the mind and memory of the nation; they will continue to stand among the material facts, which must bear thereafter upon the settlement of the question. A constitutional Government cannot go before the representatives of a free people to-day and say, "I promise you this, that, and the other," and to-morrow say to them, "I have changed my mind and I retract my promise," and fall into the gross error of supposing that by the second act it can efface and annihilate the first.

Well, Sir, the engagement to which I have referred was subsequently renewed by the late Lord Palmerston. He not only assented to, but he actually took office, as head of the Government, for the second time, upon the basis of a proposal to introduce an extension of the franchise downwards; and that extension, if not numerically wider, yet adopted arithmetically a lower figure, than that which we now propose. And I say that if the series of acts and declarations to which I have referred does not constitute an engagement between the governors of the country and those who sit in this House, and between the Statesmen of this country and the people, I for one know not in what way, or under what circumstances, it is possible that such an engagement should be formed.

Sir, it has been necessary to go into the history of this question; it has been necessary to lay firmly and broadly

the grounds of our coming discussions, because, although I was more sanguine at a former period, I do not conceal from myself that we may now be upon the threshold of a long and a painful controversy. It is with the deepest grief that I contemplate the course that has apparently been decided on by the powerful party now in Opposition, which I conscientiously believe had at the outset no adverse interest in regard to such a settlement of this question as we propose, though they have unhappily chosen to consider that they have such an interest.

But now let us consider—and it is my justification for dwelling upon the history of the question—in what form this history of the question is sometimes given from that quarter. Now, in debate we sometimes speak with haste. In the daily press articles may sometimes, we must admit, be compiled in haste; and even in the weekly press a trace of passing excitement may not be altogether inconceivable. But, Sir, we have likewise a quarterly press; and to that quarterly press we are entitled to look for what I may justly term the philosophy of history. I refer to the 'Quarterly Review,' the latest number of which I had the privilege, through the kindness of my excellent and respected friend the publisher, of consulting yesterday; and there I find the philosophy of history in regard to this question, as it is viewed by the acutest minds that can be arrayed in the service of that ancient and justly far-famed periodical. I see from this kind of history what sort of food is sometimes served up for the most fastidious appetites of the most intellectual classes. The 'Review' is published, I think, to-day; and what I am about to quote is from a critical notice of the Reform Bill. It is highly complimentary to my honourable Friend the Member

for Birmingham as regards his weight and power, but not quite so much so as respects his moral character. The article in question includes a philosophical statement of the real causes of this Reform Bill, and, starting from 1860, it shows why we have not had a Reform Bill since 1860, and why we have a Reform Bill now. These are its words:—

"Just as in 1860 and 1861 the reforming zeal of the Radicals was bought off by the sacrifice of the Paper Duty, so, from 1861 to 1865, it was appeased by the sacrifice of the gallant Confederacy. But with the fall of Richmond Mr. Bright's heart was set at ease concerning the fate of the Government to which his true allegiance is given."

I need not say what Government is intended; it is not the British Government. (A cheer.) In that cheer I hear the voice of a reader for the 'Quarterly Review.'

"And the moment Lord Palmerston was removed by death the Government instinctively felt that the time had again come round for buying off once more their insatiable ally.

"This time there was nothing for it but to reproduce a Reform Bill."

(Opposition cheers.) More readers of the 'Quarterly Review.' (Laughter and cheers.) More assenting and applauding readers!—Gentlemen who think it was the duty of this country not to have sacrificed the gallant Confederacy—that is, who think that this country ought to have gone to war on its behalf—Gentlemen who thought, and who may still think, that what they called the sacrifice of the paper duty was a measure adopted simply to appease my honourable Friend, although they themselves, in Government, had recom-

mended that sacrifice; Gentlemen who search in the hidden recesses of the breasts of their opponents for what they call the causes of events, but who have no eyes to perceive what stares them in the face, and who are totally oblivious of the fact that repeated and solemn engagements have been contracted by the Throne and the Government of this country, although they were engagements into which they themselves had not refused to enter. When we read such statements as this, it is necessary that the true history of this Reform Bill, depending not upon foolish imputations, and upon visionary suppositions, but upon the recorded history of the country, should be brought to mind; and really, Sir, when I read this particular statement, I sought for a description of it, and I could find no other so applicable—with the exception of one monosyllable which I wish entirely to pass over—as the reply of Prince Henry to Falstaff after the story of the men in buckram—

> "These lies are like the father that begot them;
> Gross as a mountain, open, palpable."

By "lies" of course I mean "erroneous statements." (An honourable MEMBER: Who is the father of them?) Who is the father of them I will not undertake to say, and of his dimensions of course I cannot possibly know anything, but whether he is or is not equivalent in size to his prototype, this description is certainly a true one—

> "Gross as a mountain, open, palpable."

Sir, the House will remember that on a former occasion I ventured to refer to the state of the constituency at the present moment as compared with what it was in

1832; and I endeavoured to show by a computation, of which I stated the grounds, that the proportion of the working classes included in the present constituency, although to our great satisfaction we had found it to be larger than we had supposed, yet was smaller than it had been in the year 1832. That statement has not yet been impugned in this House; and I do not think it can be impugned successfully. I do not think that any Gentleman, who has examined the figures, will venture to question my statement that at the present moment the quantitative proportion of the working men in the town constituencies is less than it was in 1832. But in order to obtain a full view of the importance of this fact, neither must the House forget that, since 1832, every kind of fruitful and improving change has been in operation in favour of the working classes. There never was a period in which religious influences were more active than in the period I now name. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that within that time the civilizing and training powers of education have for all practical purposes been not so much improved as, I might almost say, brought into existence, as far as the mass of the people is concerned. As regards the press, an emancipation and an extension have taken place, to which it would be difficult to find a parallel. I will not believe that the mass of Gentlemen opposite are really insensible to the enormous benefit that has been effected by that emancipation of the press, when for the humble sum of a penny, or for even less, newspapers are circulated from day to day, by the million rather than by the thousand, in numbers almost defying the powers of statistics to follow, carrying home incessantly to all classes of our fellow-countrymen accounts of public

affairs, enabling them to feel a new interest in the transaction of those affairs, and containing articles which, I must say, are written in a spirit, with an ability, with a sound moral sense, and even commonly with a refinement, that have made the penny press of England the worthy companion—I may indeed say the worthy rival—of those dearer and older papers, which have long secured for British journalism a renown perhaps without parallel in the world.

Again, by external and material, as well as by higher means, by measures relating to labour, to police, and to sanitary arrangements, Parliament has been endeavouring, has been striving to raise the level of the working community, and has been so striving with admitted success. And there is not, on the other hand, a call which has been made upon the self-improving powers of the working community, which has not been fully answered. Take, for instance, the Working Men's Free Libraries and Institutes throughout the country; take, as an example of the class, the Library of Liverpool; who are the frequenters of that institution? I believe that the majority of the careful, honest, painstaking students who crowd that library are men belonging to the working classes, a large number of whom cannot attend without making some considerable sacrifice.* Then again, Sir, we called upon them to be provident; we instituted for them Post Office Savings Banks, which may now be said to have been in full operation for four years; and what has been the result? During these four

* It should have been added, that the example was set them in 1851 of Exhibitions of the works of industry; and that they answered by establishing them for themselves, and by conducting them with singular good order and success.

years we have received their names at the rate of thousands by the week, and there are now six hundred and fifty thousand depositors in those Savings Banks. This, then, is the way in which Parliament has been acting towards the working classes; and these are the results.

But, Sir, what is the true meaning of all this? It is simply this. Parliament has been toiling to make the working classes progressively fitter and fitter for the franchise; and can anything be more unwise, not to say more senseless, than to persevere from year to year in such a plan, and then blindly to refuse to recognise its legitimate upshot—namely, the increased fitness of the working classes for the exercise of political power? The proper exercise of that power depends upon the fitness of those who are to receive it. That fitness you increase from day to day, and yet you decline, when the growing fitness is admitted, to give the power. ["No, no!" *from the back Opposition Benches.*] You decline to give the working classes political power by lowering the borough franchise. ["No, no!" *from the back Opposition Benches.*] I do not complain of the interruption; in fact, I am very glad to hear it. I wish that cry were much louder, I wish it were universal, I wish it came from the front Opposition Benches, and from my noble Friend behind me; for if our opponents were now prepared to proceed in what seems the natural sense of their interjections, we should have little matter for controversy on the subject of this Bill. But I fear it is not so. I fear the intention is to resist the consummation of the process, of which the earlier stages have been favoured and approved. This course appears about as rational as the process of a man who incessantly

pours water into a jug or bason, and then wonders and complains that at last it overflows.

Now, what are the arguments that the busy brain of man has framed in opposition to this measure? It is one favourite plea of our opponents, that we ought not to hand over the power to govern to those who do not pay the charges of Government. In the depository of wisdom to which I have referred that argument occupies a very prominent place, as it did in the speech of a noble Lord (Viscount Cranbourne), a very distinguished Member of this House; from whose discourses in this House I am afraid the political writers in the 'Quarterly Review' have been guilty of the grossest plagiarism on more occasions than one. But is this the thing that we are really going to do? are we, indeed, going to hand over the power of Government to those who do not pay the charges of Government? I will not at this moment examine into the first portion of the proposition, although I say distinctly we are not going to hand over the power at all; but is it true that the working classes do not contribute fairly, fully, largely, to the expenses of Government? This question was put to me two days ago, in consequence of my statement that, according to the best estimate I could form, the working classes were possessed of an income forming not less than five-twelfths—that is, not very far short of one-half—of the entire income of the country. I here and now repeat that statement, in the presence of those who are able to correct me if I am wrong, and in the presence of one (Mr. Mill) whom I may justly call the greatest economist of the day. Others have made higher estimates. The honourable Member for Derby (Mr. Bass), who is

no mean authority upon subjects connected with the earnings of the working classes, has placed their income at a much higher rate than I have taken. This is a matter on which I may be confuted, but scarcely contradicted; because the question is not capable of being handled as one of fact, but only of inquiry, argument, and inference. I repeat that, in my judgment, after the best examination I can make, it is a moderate estimate to put the income of the working classes at five-twelfths of the aggregate income of the country; whereas they are put off under the present law with, at the outside, what may be called one-seventh of the electoral power. Now, on the very showing of our antagonists, and putting aside altogether the question how far the human element itself may weigh, apart from money, is not such a state of things, I ask, absolutely unjust?

Perhaps I shall be told that I have based my estimate upon the income and not upon the property of the working classes. Probably that may be the answer to my statement. [Hear, hear!] Yes, I hear a cheer confirming me. I admit that I have spoken in reference to income, and not in reference to property. Well, then, any one so inclined may take it on that ground if he chooses; but he must also take the consequence of having made that choice, and he must be prepared to change the whole system of our taxation. We now lay upon income the great bulk of our taxes; and to these taxes the working classes contribute, perhaps, a larger proportion, looking at the amount of their earnings, than is paid by the proudest noble in the land. I therefore say to those Gentlemen who argue that the working classes are not entitled to the franchise because they do not possess property, but only income, that

they must be prepared to join hands with the honourable Member for Birmingham (Mr. Bright), and with the Financial Reformers of Liverpool, and instead of raising a fourteenth part of the revenue, or some such proportion, as we now do, from property, and the rest from income, we must learn how to raise a fourteenth part from income and the rest from property.

Again it is said, at least I believe it has been so said, that where the working classes have a majority they vote together as a class. Now, is there any shade or shadow, any rag, even, of proof that such is the fact? I am going to trespass upon the patience of the House by reading a letter which I received to-day from a working man, and which I shall venture to read for the especial benefit of some Gentlemen opposite. I believe the statements it contains to be perfectly true; and it is my sincere opinion that the writer's arguments are typical of the views prevalent in the class to which he belongs. In any case their nature is such that I am confident honourable Gentlemen will not be sorry to hear them.

"Dear Sir" (I do not know him personally, but he thus kindly addresses me)—"My motive in writing this is to remind you, that there are Tories who belong to the working classes; as you cannot think perhaps all you wish at the right time. We all know, that there are the same variety of principles and opinions in all classes of society. I am a working man, and have an opportunity of knowing that the Tories in principle, especially the artisan class, are very numerous, who are not now in possession of the franchise. The new Reform Bill, I think, will do about as much, I think, for the Tories as for the Liberals. It would for all we know. The love

of country and constitution is confined to no particular class. A Liberal is as loyal as a Tory. Is there any evidence to show that these men which the Reform Bill or Franchise Bill would enfranchise are not fit to be trusted? They know well that the welfare and prosperity of their country and their masters is at the same time their welfare and prosperity. Please not to make my name public."

Well, Sir, in my opinion, this letter presents a true view of the question. There is in it that patent concentrated good sense which often comes from the mind, from the mouth, and from the pen, of an uneducated man with a peculiar force of meaning, perhaps because he is in a certain sense, as I may say, without any reproach or disparagement to education, so much nearer in one sense to the point at which nature originally placed him, than are men with minds more elaborately cultivated and refined. Now, Sir, I maintain, like my correspondent, that there is no proof whatever that the working classes, if enfranchised, would act together as a class. Perhaps you ask for proofs to the contrary. It is exceedingly difficult to give a direct proof of that which has not been formally put to the test: although in my opinion ample proof, substantial, even if indirect, of the correctness of my statement does exist. For example, I take this point. Municipal franchises are in a predominant degree working men's franchises. Those franchises, if they do not quite come up to universal suffrage, at all events nearly approach household suffrage. What has been the system followed by the working classes in municipal elections? In order to institute a comparison between the municipal and Parliamentary franchises, we must select those towns, in

which the municipal and Parliamentary boundaries are the same. There are three hundred and forty-six thousand municipal voters in that portion of the towns of this country, and, computing as well as the information in our hands will permit, I find that there are one hundred and sixty-three thousand of them on the Parliamentary register. I deduct from that number one-fourth, or forty-one thousand, as representing the maximum portion of working men, and the result is that there remain one hundred and twenty-two thousand as the number of non-working men in the municipal constituency. Thus the working men number no less than two hundred and twenty-four thousand. Is not this a dreadful state of things? Yet there has been no explosion, no antagonism between classes; no question has been raised about property, nor indeed has any, even the slightest, attempt been made to give a political character to municipal institutions. [Oh, oh!] Yes, but when the municipal franchise was discussed in 1835 the party who occupied the seats of honourable Gentlemen opposite—[Mr. DISRAELI: Where were you sitting then?] My reply is that I was sitting on the Benches of that party; but I was not one of those who employed the argument. If such questions are relevant to the matter in hand, where was the right honourable Gentleman sitting at that time? He was not sitting, indeed, for he did not sit in Parliament at all; but he was standing, somewhere or other in the interests of what is termed the "Mountain," at an elevation far above any of the Benches behind me. Apart from these trifles, the material point, Sir, is this; that many of the Gentlemen, who were then sitting opposite, prophesied that great danger and mischief would spring from the municipal

franchise, because it would give a political character to municipal elections, and imbue all our corporations with a similar spirit. That being the case, I think I am perfectly justified in standing upon this important and strictly relevant fact, that, as far as I am aware, we are not able to adduce a single instance in which this majority composed from the working class has given a democratic—I will not say a disloyal or a turbulent, but a democratic character, a character distinct from that which they bore under the influence of the middle classes, to our municipal institutions or elections.

Again, Sir, with respect to the Parliamentary constituency, let Gentlemen glance impartially at the present state of things. I have on a previous occasion referred to the metropolitan boroughs. These return a large number of what are denominated "advanced" politicians sitting on this side of the House, and which have less than the usual proportion of voters of the working class. I pass now to the other end of the scale. I find that, among the present town constituencies, there are eight boroughs in which the working classes constitute, in great part as freemen, a majority on the registers. These eight towns are—Beverley, Coventry, Greenwich, St. Ives, Maldon, Stafford, Pembroke, and Newcastle-under-Lyne. What is the revolutionary character of the Members whom they return? I find that these eight towns return five who bear the name of Liberal, and nine who claim to belong to the Opposition.

These, then, are the results, as far as our narrow and partial experience goes, of having the working classes in the majority.

But there is a much broader ground, to which, I think,

no reference has yet been made, and that is the case of the boroughs, which had open constituencies, containing large majorities of the working classes, before the Reform Act; constituencies much more popular than any among those of the present day. Upon examining the probable operation of the new Bill, I find that, according to our very large definition of the working classes—a definition which we have employed rather for argument's sake, I mean in order to avoid contention, than because it was strictly and literally accurate—I find this as the result; that in sixty boroughs, returning one hundred and one Members, the working classes will or may have majorities. In these sixty boroughs, the electors form 8·4 per cent. of the population. Now let us compare with this state of things, the state of things that existed in the popular boroughs before the Reform Act. Before 1830 there were sixty-five boroughs of a strictly popular character; more popular, I conceive, than the sixty boroughs that are likely to have a majority of the labouring classes under the Bill now on the table, for the electors in them, instead of being 8·4 per cent. of the population, numbered nearly 10 per cent. And furthermore, these sixty-five boroughs returned Members for one hundred and thirty seats. If it be true that every majority of the working classes in a constituency has the control of the seat, which, however, I entirely deny, you cannot show that, under our Bill, there would be more than one hundred and one such seats; while, under the old Parliamentary system, that system which so scandalises my right honourable Friend the Member for Calne (Mr. Lowe), they numbered one hundred and thirty. We now, therefore, stand, to a certain extent, upon the firm ground of history and experience, for the

purpose of comparison. Was there developed; among those hundred and thirty Members, at any period of our history, a character in any degree dangerous to the institutions of the country? I doubt if even a single Member will be found ready to affirm that there was. Sir, it appears to me that these are considerations of great interest, considerations entitled to weight when presented, if it be not done in an offensive manner, to the minds of moderate and reflective men, on whichever side of the House they may sit, while dealing with this question. If there be a desire, and we are told there is a desire, to see it settled, I frankly own that I, for one, can see nothing dangerous to the party opposite in the proposed reduction of the borough franchise from ten pounds to seven pounds. There can, I am persuaded, be nothing dangerous to them in that reduction, if they will only take warning by the experience of the Reform Act. There was nothing in that measure prejudicial to the power or to the just influence of the party opposite, but by their own option, by their own conduct in reference to the measure, they chose to give it that character. The Reform Act was injurious to them through the effect produced on the mind of the nation by their determined resistance to its adoption. As long as I could do so, therefore, I cherished the hope that the recollection of the Reform Act, and of the consequences of their resistance, as exhibited in the transfer of predominant power to their adversaries for almost the whole of a period of five-and-thirty years, would lead them to avoid falling, a second time in the same generation, into so palpable a snare; and that they would not prejudice themselves, and their own credit in the opinions of the bulk of the population, by offering a resistance

that cannot fail, if it be prolonged, to engender more or less of aversion and hostility.

I think, Sir, the facts to which I have referred are sufficient to disprove the proposition that where the working classes form the majority of a constituency, its members are likely to work together in combination against the other portions of society. Perhaps I may be told that my argument goes too far, and that, if that be true, there can be no danger in a much larger enfranchisement than that which is proposed by the present measure. I have already said that, in my opinion, some further enfranchisement would not be attended by danger to the State. That, however, is an opinion I cannot expect Parliament, in its present mind, to adopt; and I must add that, though I believe some further enfranchisement would not be dangerous, I am far from saying, or from believing, that it would be wise to go to great lengths in that direction. Changes that effect sudden and extensive transfer of power are attended by great temptations to the weakness of human nature; and, however high our opinion may be of the labouring classes or of any other classes of the community, I do not believe that it would be right to place such a temptation within the reach of any one among them. The genius of our country and the history of our institutions dictate and recommend gradual progress; and it is in the mode of gradual progress, therefore, that these changes should be brought about.

But, Sir, it is constantly alleged, and the argument is employed with assurance, that, if we would only let the matter take its course, the enfranchisement of the working classes is actually in course of being effected by a natural process; whereas we are endeavouring to stimu-

late and force onwards this enfranchisement by artificial means. This is a matter upon which I should be extremely slow to dogmatise; because it does not admit of being brought to a test with such precision, as to warrant the employment of any tone of superlative confidence. But I must say, that the whole of the argument upon such facts as are known to us is the other way; and that I wait with anxiety, but without expectation, for the proof of this enlargement, of this natural and spontaneous enlargement, with which it is said that we are rashly intermeddling. The number of working men on the register is, I think, undeniably less at present than it was in 1832; but, of course, there is the fact that since 1832 the working men belonging to the class of freemen have somewhat diminished. I do not think that the diminution in this direction is numerically of much importance, but there has been a great diminution in the scot and lot voters, who were principally working men. That class is not, indeed, yet extinct; and therefore, in our computations respecting the future, we must allow for a continuance of this dwindling process, until the whole number of scot and lot voters, in existence at the time of the Reform Act, has disappeared. It is said, however, that there is a rapid growth of the working classes among the ten-pound householders. But where is the proof of this assertion? I believe it to be undeniable, that the rate of progress in the aggregate number of ten-pound householders has been very much less of late years, than in the first few years after the passing of the Reform Bill. From 1832 to 1851, while the population increased at the rate of forty-three per cent., the constituency, for counties and boroughs taken together, grew more than twice as fast; but from 1851

to 1866 the constituency grew only fifty per cent. faster than the aggregate population; thus showing a great slackening in the onward movement at the later, as compared with the earlier, period.

This, however, can in some degree be accounted for. There were persons not belonging to the working classes, who were classed under other denominations at the time of the Reform Act, but whose successors, as they themselves died off, have subsequently appeared in the capacity of ten-pound householders. But it is a mistake, I believe, to imagine that some very extraordinary growth has taken place among the ten-pound householders; and a still greater mistake to imagine that such growth as may have occurred, has taken place in the working portion of the population. Let us look, for a moment, at the economical facts of the case. If we take the case of the towns, we find that the increase of the constituencies since 1832 has been nearly the same, for the entire period, as that of the population. In the population it has been seventy-nine per cent., and in the possessors of the suffrage it has been eighty-two per cent.; a difference so slight, that it may be practically disregarded. It is said that there is a growth in the wealth of the working classes more than proportionate to that of the classes above them; but no attempt has been made to prove this. In my personal opinion, the largest share of the recent increase of wealth has taken place among the middle classes of the country. To put it shortly and intelligibly, the capital of the country has grown in a far greater degree than the income of the working classes. But other circumstances must be taken into view. We must not assume that the improvement in the dwellings of the artizans in towns has kept pace

with the increase of their income; nor even that they are in as great a degree as formerly the occupiers of houses at all, so as to be in a position to obtain the franchise. Again, we must remember that in the large towns, where the area is limited, the growth in the value of land, and in rents, has been much more rapid than the general growth of wealth. If we inquire what is the value of land in the City of London, and compare it with what it was twenty years ago, we shall find that its growth is entirely out of proportion to the growth in the wealth of the City, great as that growth has been. This constant pressure, arising from growing rents, and from the limitation of area, may drive the working man into lodgings; or may send him to a dwelling beyond the limits of a represented town, instead of one within them. I apprehend that these cases very frequently happen. I shall not be going too far if I assert—in fact, I may almost say it is notorious—that there are large masses of the labouring people, especially in London, who, as compared with their position twenty years ago, are better clothed and better fed, but who live in worse dwellings than they did, although they enjoy a larger income. And this arises from the fact, that there is not the same limitation in the supply of food and clothing as exists in the supply of houses, because of the contracted area, and the rigour of the law of distance. I state my own opinions with the reserve that the nature of the question requires; but I must say that I have heard no good argument to the contrary. And I stand finally upon this general statement of the case. For a man to occupy a house of ten pounds clear annual value, setting aside only the class of men who receive lodgers into their houses, he must, all things considered, have an

income of not less than from ninety to a hundred pounds a year. That clear annual value is a value minus rates and taxes; and it is also minus the cost and the depreciation of furniture. It is vain then to stand in the face of your working population and to say, "We have a law which will enfranchise all the careful, diligent, and respectable men among you; but no working man is intelligent, or industrious, or respectable, unless he can earn thirty-five or forty shillings a week." That is too severe a test; and my general statement of the facts is enough, therefore, to show that it is vain to speak of a ten-pound franchise, taking the country all over, as one which is capable of admitting, by the natural or spontaneous process which has been set up in argument against us, all the industrious and diligent persons among the lower classes.

Sir, I must now beg leave to deny that any general transfer of power, either in counties or boroughs, is contemplated by this Bill. That is to say, the preponderance of power in the constituencies, now lying in one quarter, is not by it, in our opinion, to be carried over to another. We are met too much, I think, not by reasoning, but by suspicions and by fears. Now, with suspicion it is vain to deal; it is vain to deal with fear. The reasonable course is to go to the facts and figures, and to see how they stand. I am now going, accordingly, to estimate the maximum of this formidable invasion, which we are given to understand the country may have to encounter, if the Bill should pass. There are six hundred and fifty-eight Members of Parliament; and I would ask first up to what point will the character of the representation be "tainted," so to call it, by an infusion of the influence of the labouring classes? To

begin with, there are two hundred and fifty-four county Members. Honourable Gentlemen are aware of the character of the county franchise; and I think they will be inclined to admit that that body of two hundred and fifty-four county Members is almost free from "the contamination of the working classes." [*Cries of* "No, no!" *from the Opposition.*] I hear cries of "No!" Very well; but I am unable to endorse the opinion; unless, indeed, it be thought that one working man taints a county constituency like a fly in a pot of ointment. I say that, as far as I know, there are no county constituencies where the working class is predominant. I really think that is a proposition not admitting dispute, and it is the only proposition relevant to the present issue. For the inquiry I have now in contemplation is, how many are the seats, in the elections to which the working class will possess a majority of votes? If I am told they will have an influence also when they are a minority, I reply that much more will the wealthier classes have an influence, when they form the minority. Taking, then, the ruling character of each constituency from its majority (and this, I think, involves as to working men an admission unduly large), I put counties, as a general rule, out of the question. It is true that county Members from Ireland are returned by a twelve-pound rating franchise; but I presume we shall not call those persons working men unless they be tenants, and as tenants-at-will they may be more or less under influence, but they can hardly be called working men in the sense we now contemplate.

MR. DISRAELI: There are the forty-shilling freeholders, of whom a great many are working men, in Bucks.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: They are, I apprehend, for the most part, like the fly in the pot of

ointment. ["No no!" *from the Opposition.*] What is the proportion? If we are to carry on the debate in this interlocutory fashion, I would ask what is the proportion of forty-shilling freeholders in the constituency of Bucks?

(MR. DISRAELI *signified that he would reserve further explanation until he should take part in the debate.*)

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: The right honourable Gentleman interpolates questions in the middle of my speech—with perfect relevancy I admit, and I make no complaint of it, if that course be thought convenient; yet, when I invite him to continue the argument in the way he has selected, he declines to follow it. Then I only wish to say—and certainly I thought it generally believed—that the proportion of working men in the county constituencies is too small to allow of our reckoning the county seats as seats which could be brought under their influence. I reckon, accordingly, that the county constituencies are free from the predominance of working-class influence. If this be objected to, I shall be obliged to put the proposition in a manner much more unfavourable to my opponents. For I think I have not dealt unfairly by them in saying that the county constituencies, having only a minority of working men, are free from the influence of the working classes; because I have on the other side allowed nothing for the influence of minorities composed of the middle and upper class. Now the towns in England and Wales where it is likely there may be a majority of working men in the constituency have one hundred and one seats; the towns where they must apparently be a minority have two hundred and thirty-nine seats. I assume for the moment the same proportions in the Scotch and Irish towns. Upon that assumption the effect will be that the work-

ing classes will have a majority in the choice of one hundred and twenty members for towns and cities of the three kingdoms; and they will be in a minority in the choice of members for two hundred and eighty-four seats of the same description. Then come the county constituencies, returning two hundred and fifty-four Members. Therefore, putting these numbers together, the working classes will be in a minority in five hundred and thirty-eight seats, against one hundred and twenty seats, in the filling of which they may be in a majority. Is that a transfer of power such as we ought to fear?

Sir, I am astonished when I find that it positively seems to be held by intelligent men, (such is the effect of fears and of suspicions,) that property is a cause of weakness, and that mere numbers, in spite of all history and experience, are to be regarded as stronger in determining the force of political opinions than similar numbers when they happen to be backed by property. To the very liberal statement I have made I invite the closest consideration; and I presume to think that Members will be returned to fill at least nine-elevenths of the seats of the country by constituencies where the influence of the working class cannot possibly, as a general rule, predominate.

Now, I am desirous to make well understood to the House the position in which the Government conceives itself to stand. I am not about to qualify or alter in any respect, but to confirm, what has already been asserted. To those Gentlemen whom we believe to be earnestly united with ourselves in desiring an extension of the franchise, we have cheerfully made a concession. Although we ourselves believed, and still believe, it to be the wisest course to dispose of the great subject of

the franchise before we go forward to discuss in any way the question of redistribution of Seats, yet we have promised to set our views before you in the most definite and formal manner—that is, in the shape of Bills upon the Scotch and Irish franchise, and upon the redistribution of Seats for the three kingdoms—before we go into Committee upon this Bill. That is what we have said; and we have also said, what I really until the day before yesterday had always believed it to be unnecessary to state in express words, that in speaking of this great subject of the representation of the people as a matter vital to the credit, and, therefore, to the existence of the Government, we included the subject of redistribution of Seats, along with the subject of the franchise. I had not thought it necessary to say this, because it seemed to me so obvious that nothing could be more contemptible and base than the conduct of a Government which could give out, with a view of enlisting the generous confidence of its supporters, that it would deal with the subject of Reform, and would stand or fall by its propositions, and which all the while could silently exclude from the scope of their declaration all portions of that question, except only the reduction of the franchise, though among such portions we find one, I mean the distribution of Seats, only second in importance to that of the franchise itself.

Sir, I could wish the House more clearly to understand than they do at present, the mode in which the question of time has been treated by the Government, as it bears on the progress of this Bill. I have seen or heard it stated, in what I may term multitudinous forms, that I have made it known on the part of the Government, that we will not go on with any matter

of Reform during the present year, except the question of the suffrage. I have at no time said anything of the kind. But this I have declared, and thus much I said on the introduction of the Bill; looking at the ordinary duration of the Session, we did not believe, we could not reckon, that within that period it would be practicable to deal with those other portions of the subject. Allowing for full and free discussion upon all parts of the question, we could not expect that these two portions of it would be dealt with, and still less could we entertain a favourable expectation as to the other portions of it, within the ordinary and recognised period for the duration of the Session. And, beyond all this, I have stated, as is well known, that we for our parts, from motives of duty, are indisposed to proceed with any other part of the subject, until the fate of the Franchise Bill shall have been determined. When we shall conceive that its fate is determined, it will then be for us to review our position. A portion of our work will still, it is true, remain to be performed; but we shall then more fully know the state of public business, and the feeling and desire of the House. The Franchise Bill is so framed, and professedly so framed, as to afford ample time for disposing of the whole matter under that branch of the subject, without much disturbance of the arrangements of the House, I mean of honourable Members of the House. The notices to be given with a view to registration must be given, I think, on the 10th of June; and as the most sanguine among sanguine men would hardly suppose that this Bill could receive the Royal assent before the next 10th of June, it follows with certainty that the new constituency cannot be in existence till the end of the year 1867; and con-

sequently, and beyond all question as to what may be the will of the Government of the day, either this Parliament, or, at any rate, one elected by the present constituency, has ample time for dealing with the whole subject. There may, however, be Gentlemen who have so great a love of comprehensive action as to be willing to make personal sacrifices on its behalf; and if there should be any extended desire for a prorogation or adjournment of the House, with a view to sittings in the autumn, there is nothing in the world to prevent our proceeding during the autumn and fall of the present year with the matter which is not contained in this Bill, but which is necessary to make up a complete plan for the amendment of the representation of the people. The appetite for redistribution seems to have grown so enormously within the last few weeks, that if there be a determination to let the grouse, the partridges, and the pheasants, or any of them, have a holiday, and to bring Parliament together, whether by prorogation or adjournment, in order to get this great work out of hand, it certainly is not for us to plead our own personal convenience; we shall be ready to make the sacrifice, and we shall come up as well as we can, though with visages perhaps pale and languid enough, to set a last hand to the accomplishment of the work. That, Sir, is the position in which we stand as a Government, with reference to the question of time and to the order of proceeding.

Now, Sir, there is, as far as I know, but one allegation made in these debates which is broad enough to cover and warrant the opposition offered to the Bill. I am convinced that all attempts to show there is in action under the present electoral law a self-working

enfranchisement, adequate to the case, all attempts to show that every working man, if only he be intelligent, respectable, and well-conducted, can now come upon the register, will utterly break down. Such allegations cannot be sustained on any careful investigation. There is only one allegation—I do not say whether it has been made—but it was that which was supposed to have been made by my right honourable Friend the Member for Calne. [Mr. LOWE: Understood to have been made.] And I am bound to say, as far as words have meaning, and so far as I can form a judgment of that meaning, rightly so understood. Of course, I accept at once the disclaimer of a man, of whom I freely confess that, in my judgment, so far as his conduct in this House enables us to judge, he is not more eminent for his extraordinary intellectual power—a power in a number of points never surpassed and rarely matched in this House—than he is entitled to the utmost credit for his perfect integrity. And, Sir, I take this opportunity of making an apology to my right honourable Friend, for having used hastily elsewhere some fugitive words which might have appeared to cast a reflection on another quality of his—on his courage. I did not mean any such thing; and if I uttered words which appeared to convey that imputation, I am very sorry for it. But my right honourable Friend will allow me to explain, or rather allow me to answer his explanation, on my own behalf. He has publicly stated that I have been answering at Liverpool the speech which he made in the House of Commons. I have been about nothing of the kind. Any observations made by me at Liverpool were an answer (so far as they were an answer at all) to a letter which I perceived from the public journals that he had

addressed to a portion of the electors of Calne; and I noticed the strange conclusions, and the singular labyrinthine complications, in which it appeared to me that a certain artful Mr. Bishop had contrived to entangle him. By all that I said on that matter, I abide. But my right honourable Friend says that, in the speech which he delivered in this House, he referred not to the mass of the labouring class, whom he very greatly respects, but to some persons in the different constituencies. I will not dwell on the fact that in his letter he went on to describe that very portion of the labouring class, included within the several constituencies, as men who had won their way there by forethought, and as men whom it would be an injustice to mix with the inferior persons below them. But my right honourable Friend, speaking of these guilty persons in possession of the franchise, used, beyond denial or dispute, four memorable words. And my right honourable Friend's phrases are not words that evaporate, not words of which we can say what has been said of lovers' vows—

"In vento et rapidâ scribere oportet aquâ;"

he uses a pen of steel, and his words are written on the rock. "Ignorant, drunken, venal, violent;" words easily, too easily, remembered! My right honourable Friend, he tells us in his letter, spoke of that portion of the labouring classes in the constituencies. Did he speak of them generally, or merely of one or two, here and there, among them? If he spoke of them generally, then I say his bold, but most unjust, most extravagant allegation is sufficient for its end, and justifies his opposition to the Bill. If, on the other hand, he spoke only of a few men among them, exceptions to the general conduct

and character of their order, then his allegation is, as an argument, worthless; his arrow falls short of the mark. He has no right to apply a kind of Pride's Purge to the labouring class, and say, "From you we will riddle out, before we admit you to political rights, every man who is a spendthrift, every man who is a drunkard, every man who has broken any one of the Ten Commandments;" while those higher in station, those above the magic figure of ten pounds, or above the line of daily labour, exempt from the operation of this purge of his, may have glaringly come short in every one of these respects with perfect impunity, and may be admitted to the constituency, or to this House, without, forsooth, in the slightest degree impairing the efficiency of Parliament. But did my right honourable Friend speak only of the members of existing constituencies? Is there a man now present, is there a man who heard my right honourable Friend deliver that notable speech, who forgets his famous simile of the Hyperboreans? Who and what were they? There was a belief, he informed us, among the ancients, that though the north wind brought cold from the region next to them (and that was the region of the 10*l.* constituencies; that is the region in which we stand now), yet that by going a little further towards the north (that is, by going successively to 9*l.*, to 8*l.*, to 7*l.*, and eventually to 6*l.*), at last they would arrive at a warm country. My right honourable Friend exposed the absurdity of the idea; and it was not the constituencies alone—it was the masses behind and below the constituencies—to whom his observations applied, and who in his simile occupied the place of the still colder and colder tracts, which we must encounter as we travel further and further north. How,

then, are we to be told that the speech referred only to those already in possession of the franchise? Nor is this all. My right honourable Friend supplied us with another and yet more convincing proof of his meaning—though I had endeavoured to warn him off the ground—in the use which he made of an illustration from Virgil. I had said, speaking of the measure, surely this is no "monstrum infelix," no Trojan horse charged with armed men, who are to be let loose from its womb only that they may carry fire and desolation through your homes. But my right honourable Friend, in his impatience, as though my entreaty, instead of being a warning, had been a hook that had been baited to allure him, rushed straight at his mark, and with portentous emphasis delivered the two lines from which I had drawn the phrase—

> "Instamus tamen immemores, cæcique furore,
> Et monstrum infelix sacratâ sistimus arce."

What is the "monstrum infelix"? Who are the persons contained within its hollow side? They are the voters at 7*l*. Sir, I am not seeking to tie my right honourable Friend to this construction, clear and undeniable as it is. What I have said, I have said to justify myself for having believed, with reluctance and with pain, but still for having honestly believed, that his speech was a denunciation of the working community. If I have been wrong, by all means let us hear it. For one, I shall hear it with joy. It is a matter of deep importance. It has affected the whole tone of thought and language on the question, within and beyond this House. My right honourable Friend has explained his speech. Let him explain his explanation. And when he explains it, let us distinctly understand where, in his

view, we are. Is this a charge against the mass of his working fellow-citizens, in which case it is unjust and untrue; or is it only a charge against certain bad characters among them, in which case it is utterly insufficient? If that argument of my right honourable Friend can be sustained in the more unfavourable sense, then I admit it is sufficient to destroy this Bill. But, in that case, I think it sufficient to destroy a great deal else along with this Bill. It is sufficient to destroy the hopes of every generous heart, and every intelligent mind; if that picture which my right honourable Friend, with his matchless power, strove to draw, be indeed a true picture, then there is nothing to hope for England.

I thank the House for the great patience and kindness with which it has heard me on a subject such as this. After what has occurred, it can hardly be but that we should be apt to grow warm. But let us, at all events, so far as concerns the formation of our judgments, endeavour to keep our balance; let us recollect to look before and after. In this spirit, I do earnestly intreat and conjure the House, on whichever side, to remember that it is not enough for us now to say, as we shall soon, it appears from a notice given, be asked to say, by way of answer to an expecting country, "We are ready to entertain the question of Reform with a view to its settlement." Enough, and more than enough, there have been already, of barren, idle, mocking words. Deeds are what are wanted. I beseech you to be wise; and, above all, to be wise in time.

[Motion made, and Question proposed, "That the Bill be now read a second time."]

LORD GROSVENOR'S MOTION.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: At last, Sir, we have obtained a clear declaration from an authoritative source; and we now know that a Bill which in a country with five millions of adult males—["Oh, oh!" "Hear, hear!" *and cries of* "Order!"] Am I to be permitted to proceed? ["Hear, hear!" *and renewed cries of* "Order!"]—and we now know that a Bill which, in a country with some five millions of adult males, proposes to add to the present limited constituency two hundred thousand of the middle class, and two hundred thousand of the working class, is, in the judgment of the leader of the Tory party, a Bill to reconstruct the Constitution on American principles. In the light of a declaration such as this, we can all the better consider and comprehend the opposition to the Bill.

Sir, I rise after one o'clock in the morning to review, as well as I am able, a debate which has continued through eight nights. And first, Sir, I would gladly have passed by the defence, as he calls it, and as I must presume he thinks it, which the right honourable Gentleman has made for himself and for his friends, with reference to the history of the past twenty or thirty years. I have no desire to interfere in that general controversy. I will not attempt to follow him through its details; it will require from me only the briefest notice as to its general scope. I have too

much respect for the time of the House to weary it, at this hour, with discussion which it is in my power to avoid: and I must say that I have too much respect for the judgment of the House, and for the judgment of those elsewhere who will become acquainted with our proceedings, to have the slightest apprehension that any one of the mistakes, or any one of the misrepresentations consequent on the mistakes, which have proceeded from the right honourable Gentleman, in regard to the past performances and present position of his party, will have an influence on the House or on the people.

Now, Sir, I am afraid that I must begin by owning that I have much to state. I will endeavour, however, to consult the convenience of the House by clearing out of the way at the outset some misapprehensions, which the right honourable Gentleman has assisted to propagate, and which have prevailed on the other side during this debate; to these I will refer separately and at once, because I think they have considerably tended to obscure the general issue.

In the first place, I must presume to say a word upon the subject of the references which have been made to a great name among us, in this House and in the country; I mean the name of Lord Palmerston. It has been assumed by Gentlemen who are supporters of the Amendment that they honour the memory of Lord Palmerston by describing him either generally as the enemy of Reforms, or specially as the enemy of Parliamentary Reform. Or again, and yet more specifically, by describing him especially as the enemy of that, which constitutes the essential point and the very hinge of the whole framework of this Bill; namely,

a reduction of the borough franchise. Now, Sir, to throw light upon this subject, I will read but a few words which Lord Palmerston used in supporting his own Bill in 1860. He said, that the provisions of that Bill were open, as without doubt the provisions of our Bill, and of every other Bill, are open, to consideration in Committee; but he went on to use these words, "There are certain fundamental principles in the Bill which we could not consent to have infringed, because that would destroy the measure altogether. One main principle of the Bill is, the reduction of the borough franchise."

It has been assumed, Sir, by some speakers, that the life of Lord Palmerston was a security against the introduction of a measure of Reform. I think it no less due to Lord Palmerston than to his colleagues to say that, as far as I am aware—and I presume the right honourable Gentleman will admit that, if mischief of any kind had been brewing in the Cabinet, I probably should have known it—there never was, during all the years to which the assumption refers, a difference of opinion between Lord Palmerston and his colleagues on the question of Reform. I will venture to state my own view of what passed in a former year. In my own judgment, we underwent a great responsibility in regard to the measure of 1860. The introduction of that measure was an important step, in redemption of a very solemn pledge; of a pledge which might almost have been said to constitute the basis of our official existence at the time. The abandonment of the measure probably must have taken place at some period of the Session in the state of affairs in which we stood; yet it was a matter

as to the precise time and circumstances, difficult to determine. I admit that, in that abandonment, we underwent a great responsibility. Differences of opinion there might have been with regard to it; but I know of no Member of the Cabinet of Lord Palmerston who ever thought that, after the abandonment of that measure, and considering the circumstances which prevailed from the year 1860, down to the Dissolution of last year, it would have been wise, or even warrantable, for the Cabinet to have revived the subject of Reform. The right honourable Gentleman quotes, and grossly, I must say, misquotes, a speech of mine on the subject of the suffrage: no, Sir, I will not say he misquotes it, for he did not refer to my actual words, but I will only say he entirely misstates the effect. The right honourable Gentleman, however, if he recollected that speech at all, might have recollected that in that speech I declared that, in my opinion, it would be wrong for the Government to introduce or take up the question of Parliamentary Reform, till there should have arrived such a state of public opinion as might seem to afford a fair prospect of success. That, I believe, was all along the unanimous opinion of the Cabinet. It has been observed, indeed, that my right honourable Friend the Secretary for the Home Department declared last year, that we did not make our appeal to the country as the patrons of a great measure of Reform. Certainly not; we tendered no such profession. We left the country to pronounce its own impartial judgment; and we waited, in the state of things I have referred to, for spontaneous indications of the state of the public mind with regard to the representation of the people in Parliament.

But my right honourable Friend himself has stated that, when the elections had taken place, he individually formed the opinion, which, as far as I know, was the opinion formed by the other Members of the Cabinet, that the manifestations which had been given by the country, and by candidates when appealing to the constituencies, in respect to Parliamentary Reform, when considered as a whole, had brought again before us the very occasion, on which it was our duty to become responsible for another measure of Reform. Nor have we the smallest right, the smallest ground, to suppose that Lord Palmerston differed from that opinion. We cannot, indeed, say that he agreed in it; and why? Because, at the moment of his lamented death, no single Cabinet had as yet been held, for the purpose of considering the measures to be adopted during the coming Session. But I do chance to know, and it is a posthumous record of some interest, that Lord Palmerston had a conversation with one, at least, of his colleagues at no very long period before his death—it may have been a twelvemonth, it may have been more; I cannot further define the time—on this very subject. I have not the smallest doubt in my mind, though I cannot state it as a matter of fact, that he was looking forward to the dissolution as the critical period when a fresh decision would have to be taken. But as matter of fact, in that conversation he stated his opinion that, within a limited time, it would be right for the Government again to introduce the subject of Reform. So much, Sir, for the honour of Lord Palmerston, which I confess I think has not been in the most judicious keeping during the chief part of this debate. That opinion, I hope, may be

expressed without offence, and without transgressing, in letter or in spirit, the rules of Parliament.

Now, I come to another subject, again one of a personal character, and one with which the House has been made perhaps sufficiently familiar during our long discussion. I refer to our supposed relations with my honourable Friend the Member for Birmingham. It has been made a charge against the Government that they are identified with my honourable Friend. It is admitted that we are the nominal Ministers of the Crown, but it is confidently or boldly declared that he is its irresponsible, yet its real adviser. To such a charge, couched in such terms, I shall make no reply whatever. Such persons as are disposed to admit it must have minds in a position entirely inaccessible, I will not say to deliberative reason or justice, but, at any rate, to any observations such as I can offer. In truth, such things are said not in order to convince, nor to persuade, but, if not to bewilder, at least to sting. But other and more specific charges have been made; and these it is right that, as Her Majesty's servants, we should notice. I thas been stated, that my honourable Friend the Member for Birmingham has been the adviser and virtual framer of this Bill. On that subject, inasmuch as it raises an issue of facts, and is therefore one which admits of being dealt with, let us consider what has really taken place. And I may preface my statement with this remark, that in my opinion, as well as in the opinion so gracefully, as well as manfully, expressed by my honourable and learned Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Coleridge), it would have been no disgrace to the Government, if policy had appeared to recommend it, that they should have consulted the

great organs of opinion in the different sections of their party, with respect to the best method of framing a plan of Parliamentary Reform. Had that method been pursued, it would have been impossible to overlook—it would have been culpable if, through cowardice, they had refrained from consulting, for one, my honourable Friend the Member for Birmingham. But Her Majesty's Government felt no such necessity; and, as far as I am aware, did not in any manner or degree pursue that course of consultation. They did feel that, responsible as they had been for the formation and the introduction of previous Reform Bills, and being, most of them, far from inexperienced in conducting the affairs of a Government, they had sufficient confidence in themselves, sufficient knowledge of the state of the public mind, and sufficient sense of their own responsibility, to form their own opinion on the leading provisions fit to be embodied in a measure of Reform. We were, indeed, aware of the opinions of the honourable Member for Birmingham; just as much, I believe, as, and no more than, the Gentlemen opposite were aware of them. And I apprehend that we were aware of them through the same unfailing channels—namely, the public journals of the country. What we understood to be his opinions he had stated in a speech delivered by him, I rather think at Rochdale, during the autumn. We conceived them to be as I will now state them; and my honourable Friend himself will, I doubt not, have the kindness to correct me if I am wrong. There were, I think, four points principally put forward. Firstly, that there was a certain franchise which must be considered to be the maximum admissible for counties, and that this was

ten pounds; secondly, that there was also a certain franchise which must be considered to be the maximum for boroughs, and that to make this in any manner satisfactory it should on no account be above six pounds; thirdly, he considered that the extension of the Franchise ought to be separated from the re-distribution of Seats; and fourthly—he will forgive me if I do not quote him with sufficient precision—he thought that this separation of the two subjects ought to take place for a special purpose, namely, in order that the interval of time between the two might mature and ripen the public mind after the passing of the Franchise Bill, so as to obtain, if a later, yet a more full and conclusive settlement of the later question. These, as far as my memory serves me, were the four points of opinion delivered by my honourable Friend. And what have we done? We agreed with my honourable Friend in one of them; we agreed with him in the policy of separating the question of the Franchise from the re-distribution of Seats. And, should we not have been the most contemptible of all poltroons ever misnamed Ministers, if, having that opinion, we had shrunk from acting on it because we might know well enough, without any gift of divination, that the leader, forsooth, of the Tory party (as he has described himself to-night) would found on that circumstance a charge of subserviency, which he himself must know, just as well as we do, to be thoroughly unfounded? If subserviency exists, why has it not appeared in our conduct with reference to the other opinions of my honourable Friend? Why were we of set purpose to differ with him in everything? Why have we not proposed the ten-pound franchise recommended by my honourable Friend, and

by the right honourable Gentleman himself in the Bill of 1859? Why have we not proposed the six-pound franchise introduced in 1860 under the express sanction of the right honourable Gentleman the Member for Calne, and declared by my honourable Friend the Member for Birmingham to be the highest figure that could be allowed to stand in any satisfactory Reform Bill? If this subserviency exists, how is it that these opinions have not been followed? It is true that my honourable Friend, with, I think, great moderation and great wisdom, accepts the Bill as it stands; and his acceptance of it is converted into a charge against the Bill itself. Strange position indeed, if, as seems to be the case, we have arrived at a state of things, in which the very fact that my honourable Friend gives his support to this Bill—a Bill proposing a far less popular franchise than was recommended by Lord Palmerston, whose political calmness and deliberative temper have been so justly commended in this debate; by Sir George Lewis, and by the right honourable Gentleman the Member for Calne—if the very fact that the honourable Gentleman supports this Bill is to taint, and, as it were, to poison the measure itself. Is it credible that there are such extremes of party and personal animosity in this House, and that the very essence of facts and objects is to change its nature from its relation to this or that particular individual? And are these the encouragements to political moderation in his future course, which my honourable Friend is to receive? Such, Sir, is the state of the facts, so far as we are concerned, with regard to my honourable Friend the Member for Birmingham. Yet I must still say one more word about him. I am sorry to

have to do it, but I cannot help myself. I do sincerely think he is a great deal more obliged to honourable Gentlemen opposite, than he is to us. It is my firm opinion, though it may be an erroneous one, that the Gentlemen, who adopt the line of argument that has been adopted by the right honourable Gentleman opposite, with regard to what he terms Americanizing the institutions of the country, are doing their utmost, against their will and without their knowledge—for much of what they have really been doing for a long period of time has been not only against their will, but likewise without their knowledge—to magnify and increase the influence of my honourable Friend the Member for Birmingham; and if my honourable Friend be the dangerous man he is supposed to be, and if he nurses in his breast such wicked schemes as are imputed to him against the institutions of the country, it is not through Her Majesty's Government, nor through the agency of those who are now thinking and voting with them, that he will ever obtain the means of giving effect to his fell designs, but through the line of argument and statement which has been adopted by his and our opponents, and which invests him with powers and attributes of influence such as not even his extraordinary abilities, aided as they are by his known integrity, have ever enabled him to obtain.

And now, Sir, I must bestow two minutes on a question that touches several expressions of my own. Perhaps my best apology for troubling the House on such a matter will be that they are expressions which have furnished material, in the mouths of others, for some hours of this debate. The noble Lord the Member for King's Lynn, in his very clear, very forcible, very

argumentative, and I must say, as it seemed to me—though it has been criticised to a contrary effect—by no means uncandid speech, complimented me on not having used any of those expressions which may perhaps be best and most briefly summed up in a single phrase that will be sufficiently understood by the House—namely, the "flesh and blood" arguments. Now, Sir, I wish that the noble Lord, the right honourable Baronet the Member for Hertfordshire (Sir E. Lytton), and the right honourable Gentleman the Member for Calne, had a little more considered what really took place with regard to the use of that and of other more or less similar expressions. The right honourable Member for Calne for I think half an hour, the right honourable Baronet the Member for Hertfordshire for perhaps half an hour more, not having themselves heard me use the phrase which became for them so copious a theme, founded detailed declamation, argument, denunciation, and I know not what, upon a pure assumption. They assumed, and doubtless they believed, I had used the fact, that the working classes are of our own flesh and blood, as a reason why the Bill now before the House should be passed. And my right honourable Friend the Member for Calne, in a part of his speech which I admit was quite unanswerable, showed that thus to make use of such a consideration would be the greatest imaginable absurdity. Undoubtedly! But then it so happens I never did use any argument of the kind. There are limits to human folly; and neither here nor elsewhere should I have dreamed of so eccentric a proceeding. I used the expression in a totally distinct view. I used it as a reply—nay, I will presume to go one step further and say, if it be not presumptuous to say it—I used it as

a reproof, to the language of some of the opponents of the Bill. And in that view I justify and abide by the use of it. Sir, in my opinion there are times in debate, when extraordinary errors are best met by the declaration of elementary truths. When I heard it stated by a Gentleman of ability that to touch the question of enfranchising a further portion of the working class was domestic revolution, I thought it time to remind him that the simple performance of the duties of citizenship does give some presumption of capacity for civil rights, and that the burden of proof, that exclusion from such rights is warrantable or wise or (as it may be) necessary, lies upon those who exclude, rather than upon those who admit. That, as I think, very simple declaration was magnified into revolutionary doctrine; and great service has it once more done to-night to the leader of the Tory party. On the same grounds, when I heard my right honourable Friend declaring these working men at from seven to ten pounds, and that not once only as it must now be said, to be an invading army, and even something more, to be an invading ambush, to be a band of enemies, which was to bring ruin and conflagration, as the purpose of its mission, into a city all fore-doomed; and when I heard these opinions, and his portentous illustration of them, once and again repeated, I thought it was time to fall back upon elementary truths as the proper antagonists to these extraordinary errors; and to say, these men whom you are denouncing, not by argument and reason, but beyond the bounds of all argument and all reason, are your own flesh and blood. And now, Sir, having stated thus much, I must so far notice the speech of the noble Lord (Viscount Cranbourne) who commenced this debate to-night, as emphatically to deny

that in any one point or particular, when speaking elsewhere, as he said, and, as has been said by others, in the provinces, but as I should say, addressing my own constituents, have I gone so much as one jot or tittle beyond the statements made by me on the floor of this House. I do not know really whether I am to look to the principles or to the practice of the noble Lord the Member for Stamford, as establishing the rule with regard to what is to be done out of the House by its Members in the use of tongue or pen. I am quite willing, however, to say, without further examination of his practice, that I abide by his precepts; and this I promise him, I will freely submit to any censure he can bestow, and if there is censure to be bestowed I admit he is a good hand at the operation, when he can show that on any occasion I have said elsewhere of any Members of this House, or of any proceeding in this House, that which I have not said here, or am not ready to say upon this floor, where in my judgment it is that all our battles may best be fought. I have however, Sir, a more agreeable admission to make. What I have said in the nature of platitudes, or of truisms, or of revolutionary maxims—and the condemned dicta have passed under all these designations alternately, as might suit the tastes of the different critics—has been said with reference to declarations made by persons of the greatest weight in this House, made, too, not amid the sound merely, but rather amid a tumult and tempest of cheers; and therefore to be taken as setting forth the sentiments not of one, but of many. Yet, I am glad and thankful to admit that those cheers and tumult, overpowering as they were, did not represent the universal sentiment on the other side of the House from which they proceeded. The honourable

Gentleman the Member for South Lincolnshire explained that certain cheers, which had led me to suppose he might be one of those who entertained opinions of the working class, such as I endeavoured to protest against, had been incorrectly interpreted, and really referred to another subject. My honourable and learned Friend the Member for Suffolk (Sir Fitz-Roy Kelly), although he has not taken part in this debate, spoke in another discussion, upon the malt duty, a few evenings back, on the character of the working class, in a spirit which proves that he, at least, entertains none of those ungenerous sentiments in regard to them; and that tone, I feel assured, notwithstanding some instances leading to a contrary conclusion, would be found considerably to pervade the Benches opposite. But I now pass on from the brief explanation which I have given of the particular epithets and expressions used by myself with reference to the sentiments of others; and I think I may appeal to honourable Members to support me when I say that it was not I who first introduced into these discussions observations of this colour and description. It was not in my opening speech that they had their rise; and so long as our debates are conducted in the manner of which the speech of the noble Lord opposite (Lord Stanley) has furnished us with so good an example, I may, I hope, venture to promise him that the House will never hear from me any more of such expressions, be they platitudes, be they truths, or be they fairly characterised as revolutionary and subversive paradoxes.

And now, Sir, I proceed. Now, I come to take a retrospect of this debate. It is natural, it is unavoidable, that my attention should first, and in a principal degree, rest on the remarkable speech which we heard yesterday

from my right honourable Friend the Member for Calne. With that speech I shall not attempt to deal in detail, and that for many reasons. One of these reasons, perhaps, is a disinclination to measure swords with such a man. [Hear, hear!] That cheer, complimentary as it is, does not, at any rate, precede, but follows, my own admission. A second reason is in my recollections, and a third lies in my hopes, with respect to my right honourable Friend. I cannot forget—although he may—his connection with the men who sit on these Benches. I cannot forget the real services which, as a public man, he has rendered; and while I know of no language strong enough to express the grief—nay, the astonishment—with which I regard his present extraordinary opinions and declarations on the question of Reform, passing, as they seemed to do, beyond those entertained, or at least those avowed, by other Members, yet I think the evident framework of his mind, as well as his recent conduct on other questions, entitles him to this admission at the hands of his party, both that he is pursuing the dictates of his conscience, and that upon general subjects his judgments are frankly liberal. I only hope that, when he is again doing battle in the ranks, and for the political objects, of those among whom he sits, he may display a little more moderation than he has done in the course of the present struggle. With respect, however, to his speech, I may be permitted to observe upon it in either of two aspects. When I look upon it in the light of a great Parliamentary display; when I consider the force of the weapons which he used, the keenness of their edge, and the skill and rapidity of the hand by which they were wielded, I am lost, indeed I was at the time lost, in admiration, though I was

myself the object of a fair proportion of the cuts and thrusts which he delivered. But, Sir, when I take another view of that remarkable discourse; when I think of the end and aim to which it was applied—when I remember how shallow, how unworthy, was the exhibition which he gave us of this great and noble Constitution of England, which I, for one, really thought had struck some roots into our soil, and was fixed there in a manner to defy the puny efforts of my Lord Russell and his Colleagues—when I recollect how my right honourable Friend exaggerated more and more as he went on his idle fears and apprehensions, and coloured every object more and more highly in the phantom visions he had conjured up—when I found him travelling back to Australia, his old abode, and on discovering there that the public men of that country had, after all, been simply prosecuting in his absence the career which they commenced under his auspices—when he ended with this portentous discovery, that what he called anarchy must be arrested in the colonies by the paramount power of Parliamentary interference from this country, for the purpose of taking away from our fellow-countrymen at the antipodes the powers of self-government which they enjoy,—then I confess that the admiration I had felt was lost and swallowed up, I will hardly say in shame, but at the least in grief. Will my right honourable Friend permit me to apply to him the story which is told of the mother of the Regent Duke of Orleans, Elizabeth the Princess Palatine of Bavaria? She said of her son, what I will venture to apply to my right honourable Friend. Her story was, that at his birth the fairies were invited to attend. Each came, and each brought the infant the gift of a talent. But in sending the invitations one fairy

had unhappily been forgotten. She came unasked, and said, for her revenge, "Yes, he shall have all the talents except one; that of knowing how, and for what end, to apply them."

The argument of my right honourable Friend depended entirely on a series of what I may call enormous, and at the same time utterly unsound, assumptions. The first which I shall deal with is the assumption, that the Government has insulted the House of Commons. Insult, vilification, degradation, harshness, tyranny, despotism; these are some of the flowers of speech which have been applied in the course of this debate, I think especially by my noble Friend the Member for Haddington, on the part of those whom he calls moderate Liberals, but also by others, to the conduct of the Government. But, to do him justice, my right honourable Friend the Member for Calne never deals in generalities; so he fastened on a phrase. He thinks he substantiated his charge of insulting Parliament by saying that I had used these words, "We know with whom we have to deal." The right honourable Gentleman says that phrase means the House of Commons; and, consequently, that the House of Commons is insulted. But did it mean the House of Commons? It did not. There is no more common political artifice, as far as my experience goes, than this; when a gentleman finds himself stung, or fastened down, or aptly described, by some particular phrase or sentiment, he shifts the application of it from himself, and he complains that it has been applied, and, of course, disrespectfully applied, to the House of Commons. Sir, I did not intend my phrase for the House of Commons. I will explicitly tell my right honourable Friend to whom I did not apply it, and, if it be any satisfaction to him,

I will tell him also to whom I did apply it. I did not mean it for my right honourable Friend the Member for Cambridge University, or for the right honourable Gentleman the Member for Oxfordshire, both of whom, as we perfectly well know, are friendly to a reduction of the borough franchise. We may, indeed, have a battle with my right honourable Friend (Mr. Walpole) at the proper time; for he declares, although I own myself unable to perceive it, that a principle is involved in the difference between the rates of ten pounds and fourteen pounds as applied to the counties, and between the amounts seven pounds and eight pounds as applied to the boroughs. But he is friendly to some reduction of the franchise in boroughs. He has declared his opinions, and no doubt he will be ready at the proper time to vote in conformity with them. His whole conduct has been open and direct. If I had applied such an expression to him I should have been guilty of the grossest injustice. I had in my mind very different persons. Does my right honourable Friend the Member for Calne recollect how, in one of his plays, that prince of comedians, Aristophanes, conveys, through the medium of some character or other, a rebuke to some prevailing tendency or sentiment of the time—I cannot recollect now what it was—too many are the years that have slipped away since I read it—but that character, addressing the audience, says, "And now, my good Athenians, pray recollect that I am not speaking of the city, I am not speaking of the public, I am only speaking of certain depraved and crooked little men." And if I may be permitted to make a metaphorical application of these epithets—confining myself most strictly to the metaphorical use, speaking only in a political sense, and with exclusive

reference to this question of Reform, I would say it was not of the House of Commons that I used these words, but of "certain depraved and crooked little men;" and I frankly own now in candour that my right honourable Friend is, according to my judgment and intention, the very first and foremost among them. "We know with whom we have to deal;" because we know we have to deal with him. My right honourable Friend is opposed to the lowering of the borough franchise. He knows that is the object of this Bill. If I understood his speech aright, and he is so perspicuous that it is hardly possible to be mistaken, he is opposed to Reform in every shape and form; yet, though he is opposed to the measure as a whole, he does not oppose the second reading of the Bill, but has been content to vote for an Amendment which, in effect, says no more than this, "We think that is a bad Bill, which is already on the table, but you must lay another bad Bill on the table, and then we shall be ready to consider it." I think, therefore, that I am justified in using the words, significant as I admit them to be, "We know with whom we have to deal." We have to deal with Gentlemen who are opposed to the reduction of the Franchise, but who do not think proper to express the ground of their opposition by their vote. The course we have taken is a course that we have taken avowedly upon a principle. We do not deny, we do not dispute, that we are contending for the reduction of the Franchise. We are not now contending for a particular amount. We may mean to propose, and we may mean to adhere to, a particular amount; but what we are now contending for is a reduction of the Franchise, especially in towns. But we are opposed by open antagonists, and we are also opposed by concealed

antagonists. We wish to strip away the disguise from this latter class of antagonists. We wish that they should speak audibly, and in the face of day, that which they think, that which they mean; and no effort, Sir, on our part, no amount of endurance, no amount of labour that we can undergo, shall be wanting to attain that object, and to take care that the people of England, as well as we, the Government, shall know with whom we have to deal.

Then the second head of my right honourable Friend's indictment against us as to insulting this House was that, after we had produced a certain quantity of statistics, we declared it should not, with our good will, have any more. Sir, we never said, I never said, anything of the kind. What I said was, that when questions respecting the social anatomy of class, and the conditions and the numbers in particular of the working class, reached a point which, I say frankly, appeared to me to threaten to assume an invidious and offensive character—I mean a character justly offensive to them —what I did say was that it was time such inquiries should stop, and that, as far as the Government was concerned, we would be no party to their being carried to such a point. As to the supply of further statistics, Members know the reverse; for example, the honourable Member for Northamptonshire knows well that, on the very same night when this matter was under discussion, the Government made not the smallest objection to the production of the further statistics which he desired.

But my right honourable Friend says—and I think this was the third proof he gave that we were insulting the House—he says that the information on the subject

of the re-distribution of Seats, that is, the measure which we intend to propose on that subject, is kept back out of mere wantonness. And the task he commends to me is this: I have to show, he conceives, that the measure of re-distribution is so entirely detached from the considerations applicable to the second reading of our present Bill, that it ought upon no account to be given to the House before such second reading, and yet that it is so intimately intertwined with the considerations applicable to the Motion for going into Committee, that it must of necessity be given to the House before it is about to go into Committee. Sir, I am bound to prove, and I shall prove, no such thing. It is not we who have ever held that the measure for re-distribution was so intertwined with the subject-matter of this Bill, that it must necessarily be given before we could go into Committee. On the contrary, Sir, we have frankly declared, but always knowing, as I said before, with whom we have to deal, that the great apprehension which possessed us was not one merely respecting the course that would on that night be taken by the representatives of the small boroughs, gentlemen who might be naturally and not unwarrantably alarmed on behalf of their constituents. That is a comparatively small matter. But our main dread was, that the covert enemies of the reduction of the Franchise would make use of that whole wilderness of multitudinous particulars which belongs to the subject of a re-distribution of Seats, and would by this means perplex and entangle the entire question, so as to render progress with it virtually impracticable within the period likely to be at our command. That was the fear we entertained. But as time went on we found that many differed from us as to our

mode of procedure, with respect to whom it would have been insolence on our part to doubt, that they at the same time concurred with us in a common object—namely, in the desire for a reduction of the Franchise. Without the smallest reserve, therefore, and in deference to those wishes, we departed from the method of action which our own judgment recommended, and we incurred what we thought real hazard and inconvenience as far as the progress of the measure is concerned. We have, however, adhered all along to the opinion we originally expressed—that the safest course, could we have persuaded the House to pursue it, would have been a complete separation, for the moment, of the two subjects. I say for the moment, because I am now reminded that I omitted to notice, I believe, at the proper time, one point in regard to the opinions of the honourable Member for Birmingham. That particular opinion of my honourable Friend, that the re-distribution of Seats was a question to be reserved with a view to an intermediate ripening of the public mind on the subject, was an opinion that we have never entertained. It was an opinion that my honourable Friend might entertain with perfect honour; but for us—as men who had formerly combined the two subjects, and as men who now professed to disunite them exclusively upon grounds of convenience and advantage in point of procedure, for us to entertain such a latent purpose would have been a base device, would have been conduct unworthy either of a Government, or of any gentleman or any reputable man, in whatever capacity or station. And I must confess it is with pain and with much difficulty that I can allow myself to believe, that any such opinion can have been entertained of the Government by any single gentle-

man, who numbers himself among its supporters. I cannot complain or wonder at its being ascribed to us by Gentlemen opposite; for the distinction which the honourable and gallant Member for Huntingdon has made between personal and political honour is a distinction, which has been at least conventionally established to a sufficient degree to deprive us of any title to complain against charges of that kind. But I must say that for Gentlemen who have general confidence in the Government, to think the Government capable of any such act, is a thing I am at a loss to understand; and the advice I would respectfully presume to give them is, that they withdraw that general confidence immediately, and make it their first business, not to carry an indirect motion like the Amendment now under consideration, but at once to put the Government out of office by the most direct and decisive means they can discover. Thus much, Sir, as to the charge of insulting the House by withholding information.

And now, Sir, I hope I may say a few words as to the general charge of an attempt to domineer or tyrannize over this House. The right honourable Gentleman opposite has given me a favourable opportunity of explaining my position on that subject to the Liberal party. If, Sir, I had been the man who at the very outset of his career, well nigh half a century ago, had with an almost prophetic foresight fastened upon two great groups of questions, those great historic questions of the age, of which the right honourable Gentleman opposite, to judge from the last portion of his speech, seems never to have heard; I mean the questions relating to the removal of civil disabilities for religious opinions, and to Parliamentary Reform—if I had been

the man who, having thus in his early youth, in the very first stage of his political career, fixed upon those questions and made them his own, then went on to prosecute them with sure and unflagging instinct, until the triumph in each had been achieved; if I had been the man, whose name has been associated for forty years, and often in the very first place of eminence, with every measure of beneficent legislation—in other words, had I been Earl Russell, there might have been some temptation to pass into excess in the exercise of authority, and some excuse for the endeavour to apply to this House a pressure in itself unjustifiable. But, Sir, I am not Earl Russell. The right honourable Gentleman, secure, I suppose, in the recollection of his own consistency, has taunted me with the political errors of my boyhood. The right honourable Gentleman, when he addressed the honourable Member for Westminster, took occasion to make a cheap display of magnanimity, for he declared that he would not take the philosopher to task for what he wrote twenty-five years ago. But when he caught one who thirty-five years ago, when just emerged from boyhood, and still an undergraduate of Oxford, had expressed an opinion adverse to the Reform Bill of 1832, of which he had for long years bitterly repented, then the right honourable Gentleman could not resist the temptation that offered itself to his appetite for theatrical effect. He, a Parliamentary champion of twenty years' standing, and the leader, as he informs us to-night, of the Tory party, is so ignorant of the House of Commons, or so simple in the structure of his mind, that he positively thought he would obtain a Parliamentary advantage by exhibiting me to the public view for reprobation as an opponent of the Reform Bill of

1832. Sir, as the right honourable Gentleman has done me the honour thus to exhibit me, let me for a moment trespass on the patience of the House by exhibiting myself. What he has stated is true. I deeply regret it. But I was bred under the shadow of the great name of Canning; every influence connected with that name governed the first political impressions of my childhood and my youth; following Mr. Canning, I rejoiced in the removal of religious disabilities from the Roman Catholic body, and in the free and truly British tone which he gave to our policy abroad; following Mr. Canning, I rejoiced in the opening he boldly and wisely made towards the establishment of free commercial interchanges between nations; with Mr. Canning, and under the attraction of that great name, and under the influence likewise of the yet more venerable name of Burke, I own that my youthful mind and imagination were impressed with those same idle and futile fears, which still bewilder and distract the mature mind of the right honourable Gentleman. I had conceived that very same fear, that ungovernable alarm at the first Reform Bill, in the days of my undergraduate career at Oxford, which the right honourable Gentleman now feels at the measure before the House; and the only difference between us is this—I thank him for bringing it into view by his quotation—that, having those views, I, as it would appear, moved the Oxford Union Debating Society to express them clearly, plainly, forcibly, in downright intelligible English; while the right honourable Gentleman does not dare to let the nation know what it is that he really thinks, but is content to skulk under the shelter of the meaningless Amendment which is proposed by the noble Lord. And now, Sir, I quit the

right honourable Gentleman; I leave him to his reflections; and I envy him not one particle of the polemical advantage which he has gained by his discreet reference to the proceedings of the Oxford Union Debating Society in the year of grace 1831.

My position, then, Sir, in regard to the Liberal party, is in all points the opposite of Earl Russell's. Earl Russell might have been misled possibly, had he been in this place, into using language which would have been unfit if coming from another person. But it could not be the same with me. I am too well aware of the relations, which subsist between the party and myself. I have no one of the claims, which he possesses in such abundance. I came among you an outcast from those with whom I associated, driven from their ranks, I admit, by no arbitrary act, but by the slow and resistless forces of conviction. I came among you, to make use of the legal phraseology, in *formâ pauperis*. I had nothing to offer you, but faithful and honourable service. You received me, as Dido received the shipwrecked Æneas:

> "Ejectum littore, egentem
> Accepi;"

and I only trust you may not hereafter at any time have to complete the sentence in regard to me:

> "Et regni, demens! in parte locavi."

You received me with kindness, indulgence, generosity, and I may even say with some measure of your confidence. And the relation between us has assumed such a form that you can never be my debtors, but that I must be for ever in your debt. It is not from me, under such circumstances, that any word will proceed that

can savour of the character, which the right honourable Gentleman imputes to the conduct of the Government with respect to the present Bill. And now, Sir, let me state what I take to be the actual condition of the question that is to be decided to-night. For this is not only a brilliant and a protracted debate, it is not only one upon which the House of Commons has freely lavished from every one of its parties or its sections the choicest treasures of its wit, its argument, its rhetorical and its persuasive powers; it is also an historical debate. We are now about the process which is called "making history." We are now laying the foundations of much that is hereafter to happen. This occasion is a starting-point, from which I presume to think the career we have to run, as individuals and as parties, will in many respects take its character and colour. Now, Sir, the main charge brought against us is this: that we have introduced a Franchise Bill alone. Is that, then, such a very grave offence? There were two reasons that might, surely, and without reproach, have moved us to take such a course. One was the reason of policy; the desire to avoid giving temptation, unnecessarily, for a combination of persons formed from various and opposite quarters, and uniting, though on different grounds, for the common but momentary purpose of rejecting the Bill. If we were influenced by that motive, I do not know that in confessing the fact we need in any way be ashamed of it. But the conclusive reason, which swayed us, was that which I mentioned in introducing the Bill; the feeling that the passing of a combined Bill must be regarded as practically impossible; that, under the circumstances which then existed, it was not wise for us to ask the House to continue its sittings through the

autumn; that the time which we must reckon as likely to be consumed in debate upon the double measure would be more than we could make sure, within the ordinary limits of the Session, we should be able to devote to it; and that, consequently, if we should introduce a measure which we knew could not in the ordinary course of things pass the House in the time available for its discussion, not only would there be another failure to be added to the already long list of Parliamentary miscarriages, but a failure, too, attended on our part with gross dishonour. We should have met with all, and more than all, the opposition which has encountered us, although not, perhaps, from the same quarters. And we should have had, to boot, the reproach from within, that we had adopted an indirect method of proceeding, and had claimed credit for being the friends of Reform, while we had laid upon the table a measure which we ourselves knew it was impossible to carry through. This second and conclusive reason was, then, the question of time. It was the twelve-day or twenty-four day argument, which has attained such considerable celebrity; and on which my mind dwells with peculiar satisfaction, because it seems to have been the only point of all those mooted in this debate, on which everybody has been agreed. No one, at least, has challenged it.

That argument of time was also for us, under the circumstances, an argument of honour; and the noble Lord the Member for King's Lynn has fairly owned, that the alternative to our method of proceeding was the postponement of the whole question to next Session. Now, after what has passed, let the noble Lord place himself in our position. I ask the noble Lord, for I have confidence in his fairness, to place himself in our

position. We were the authors, most of us, of measures which had resulted in two or three former failures. We had taken part, most of us, in the strong and decisive measure, which resulted in the ejection of the Government of Lord Derby, upon a Bill relating to this very same subject. We had postponed, for several years after that resolution, the resumption of the subject which had been dropped in 1860. We found upon inquiry last autumn, that we could obtain, in time to legislate, all the information which appeared to us to be needed in order to enable Parliament to deal with the Franchise. Was it, then, so great an offence, an offence which deserved to be visited with such severity, that we thought it more honourable to ourselves, and more honourable to our party, to do at once that which we found we could do at once, and to postpone to a later stage that which absolutely required to be postponed? Was it so strange a thing that, after four Reform Bills had failed, and failed egregiously, we should think of varying their form, of removing some of the cargo from the ship? Was not that, indeed, the natural course to pursue, when it had been found impossible to navigate her with the whole of it aboard?

And again, Sir, had the House of Commons evinced a deliberate determination on former occasions only to deal with the extension of the Franchise and the re-distribution of Seats as one measure, the case would have been different. But no such determination had been announced; nor can any such opinion be found upon the records, or inferred from the acts, of the House. In the many debates, which have taken place upon the Bill with respect to the county franchise, introduced by my honourable Friend the Member for West Surrey, it

was never urged that that measure must of necessity be combined with a proposal for the re-distribution of Seats, nor have suggestions of this kind been ordinarily made, if my memory serves me right, in the debates which have taken place upon the Bill introduced by my honourable Friend the Member for Leeds to effect a reduction of the Franchise in boroughs. Again, Sir, is not our legislation for Ireland a case eminently in point? Does not Ireland present to us the very smallest borough constituencies in the kingdom? And yet we proceeded without scruple, or difference among ourselves, in the case of Ireland, in the very same manner we have now adopted. We added one hundred thousand or one hundred and fifty thousand, or, as I have seen it stated, a yet larger number, of voters to the constituencies of Ireland; and still we have never touched the question of re-distribution at all. And yet, because the Government have adopted a similar course, our conduct is regarded as something monstrous, and as justifying every kind of strange and dishonouring suspicion.

And now, Sir, I will turn to another head of evidence. Let us see what honourable Gentlemen say when they go to their constituents. That is a description of evidence to which, in my opinion, much weight should be attached; because the sentiments of honourable Gentlemen on such occasions are dictated not only by reason but by instinct—by that instinct which, as an inward monitor, teaches them what to say when they come before the arbiters of their fate. I have been rather curious in examining the Addresses of honourable Gentlemen; and I find that there were one hundred and seventeen borough Members who entered into particulars on the subject of Reform, and who were not content with a mere

reference to it in general terms. Out of these, no more than sixteen referred at all to the question of the re-distribution of Seats; and I believe that every one of those sixteen members, who have testified in this unequivocal manner to their belief in the importance of re-distribution of Seats, is going to vote with the Government in favour of the present Bill. The remaining one hundred and one declared themselves at the election upon the Franchise alone. Whether some of them may since have become conscious of the great importance of the re-distribution of Seats I do not know; but on referring to the names, I find that the vast majority of those, who think the subject of Reform is worth introducing at all, refer to it, while making their profession of a political creed, simply in connection with what we hold to be its most important branch, namely, the extension of the Franchise. Therefore, Sir, I must say I do not think it can be shown that any great reproach can attach to the Government for the course which it has pursued.

Now, Sir, I come to the language that has been held about the inconvenience of the separation. The noble Lord opposite (Lord Stanley) has argued this part of the question (to use the common phrase) very high. I do not blame the noble Lord for what I certainly thought a strain of great exaggeration. I will only say this, I doubt whether it was altogether consistent in the speaker of the speech. For what was the noble Lord's own course in 1859? The noble Lord objects to anything lying in prospect only; he wants to have everything in hand. Is that really so? There are two heads under which his objection arises; one is with respect to boundaries; and the right honourable Gentleman (Mr. Disraeli) has shown to-night that this is much the greater

of the two in his opinion. The other has reference to the re-distribution of Seats. How did the noble Lord himself stand in 1859, with respect to the question of boundaries? Though the Government, of which he was a member, had been twelve months in office when they brought in their Bill, though they had had ample time for ascertaining all the facts, and for proposing an exact system of delimitation to Parliament, they made no such proposal; all they did was to insert a clause in general words, directing that inquiries should be made, which inquiries were to be made after the Bill for Reform should have passed, and were then to be followed by a Bill for fixing boundaries. So that, as to this head, the noble Lord now flings at us as a charge the very thing which in 1859 he did himself. And what did he do with respect to re-distribution? He put only fifteen seats in his Bill. It was not much, but it was the best part of the measure. The other provisions of the Bill of 1859 were such as I would rather not now describe. Well, the noble Lord with his colleagues dealt, by his Bill, with fifteen seats; and having thus satisfied himself, he also proposed to fix a certain rate for the borough and county franchise; and then he held to the House language to this effect: "Though we give you only fifteen seats now, it is because we cannot do more at present; but if you look at the borough and county franchise, you will see that, as they are now to be identified, by-and-bye you can re-distribute seats as much as you like." Thus, having by the Bill thrown the entire question of boundaries bodily into the future, and having left the question of re-distribution, in a great measure, to stand over for its real settlement at some time perfectly undetermined, the noble Lord now comes down and delivers this admirable

speech—admirable except because he was the speaker of it—on the intolerable inconvenience of making any separation at all, between the question of the Franchise and the determination of the constituencies among which the seats are to be divided.

And now, Sir, I wish to say one word on an illustration used by the noble Lord. Not the figure about the building of a house; for that was well answered by my honourable and learned Friend the Solicitor-General for Scotland, who reminded him that we were not going to build a house at all, for we have got a very good one already. But I refer to the illustration which the noble Lord drew from the subject of finance. Said the noble Lord, "In finance you would never proceed as you are now proceeding, for in finance the House always has the whole scheme of the year before it." But does the noble Lord forget that controversy, of historic fame, which closed about four or five years ago, when, for the special purpose of the protection of its privileges, the House thought fit to unite all the taxes and all the chief financial measures for the year in one Bill? Until that year the practice had been to pass the various financial proposals as independent Bills, subject to all the risks which the noble Lord described, and all the dangers and inconveniences which he conjured up, and presented to our view as attendant upon severances of this kind. But who were the defenders of that separate legislation? Why, all its defenders came from behind the noble Lord; they were the very same men who to-night I suppose will crowd one of the lobbies of the House to sustain a vote in extravagant contrariety to the principle for which they then contended.

My right honourable Friend the Member for Cam-

bridge University made what I must frankly call a commendable, and in intention a helpful suggestion. Why do not you proceed by Resolution? he asked. I thank him for his inquiry, because I am certain of the spirit in which that suggestion was offered. But had my right honourable Friend thought of the real meaning of proceeding by Resolution? We could easily conceive, I think, how our first Resolution would be framed; it might be very short, for the subject would not require much detail. Again, it would be easy to put into a few Resolutions so much of the Bill as related to the Franchise; but I want to know how he would have put the re-distribution of Seats into the form of Resolutions? Would he have a Resolution declaring that it is expedient to take away so many Members from thirty or forty boroughs; and if so, would he name those boroughs? If he did not name them, the Resolution would be meaningless, a shot fired in the air; and if he did name them, what, I ask, would be the difference between the Resolution and a Bill for re-distribution, so far as regards the main point in issue—namely, the gaining time by avoiding multiplied topics of debate. Nothing would be gained by that course. I fully appreciate the suggestion, but I am bound to say I do not think we have incurred any evil result, or have deserved any blame, in not adopting it.

Now, Sir, what is the real state of the case with regard to re-distribution of Seats? This is very much at the root of our present difficulty. My honourable Friend the Member for Birmingham has said truly tha it is conceivable that you might have a scheme of re-distribution such as altogether to frustrate and to intercept the effect of any given reduction of the Franchise.

If we were to introduce a scheme of that kind, I admit that everything that has been said against us would be just. But, Sir, we are not as persons who have given no indication in former times of their views of re-distribution. My belief is that re-distribution, though an exceedingly important subject, is, under existing circumstances, secondary altogether to the Franchise; because it is limited by and regulated upon principles, which I think afford little room for difference of opinion among fair-minded and moderate men. The re-distributions of the Bill of 1854, of the Bill of 1859, and of the Bill of 1860, have proceeded upon one and the same set of principles; namely, to abridge the representation in one portion of our system, by taking Members from the boroughs of small populations, and to divide the seats thus obtained, in such proportion as might be thought fair, between the new towns, and such of the counties and large towns already represented as might appear to have just claims to an increase of representation. Such are the principles; but of course there must be some variety in the mode of applying them. In that view of the subject I think any reasonable man will see that our principles of re-distribution, at least, comprise nothing at all that can vitally affect in any manner a Bill which extends the Franchise. The Bill I think of the right honourable Gentleman and Lord Derby proposed to enfranchise seven towns. Birkenhead has since been enfranchised; but six of those boroughs still remain, and their population averages twenty thousand, so that altogether their population numbers one hundred and twenty thousand. Take, then, one hundred and twenty thousand people out of the counties; what is the number of seven-pound voters which would by such a

measure be brought into existence? It is not worth considering for a moment. One distinguished speaker opposite did, indeed, I think, state that there were two or three millions of people in the counties that might properly be withdrawn from them, and included within the towns. I grant that if you approach the subject of re-distribution with the intention of what is commonly called "cooking the constituencies," you will, by seeking to destroy the effects of the reduction of the Franchise through the re-distribution of Seats, make re-distribution a most dangerous engine as regards public liberty. We disclaim and condemn all such intentions. I think our former conduct ought to acquit us of any such intentions. But if such intentions be imputed to us, it ought to be by our enemies; for such intentions as these are surely not to be imputed compatibly with political friendship. We consider it to be the proper purpose of re-distribution by moderate and reasonable changes to second the provisions of the law touching the Franchise, not covertly to neutralize and overturn them.

Now, Sir, we have been asked to do some things, and we have done them. But let us just consider what they are, and what they are not. It has been stated, and stated assiduously, that we have said that re-distribution must be postponed for another year, and that nothing can be done on that subject until the Franchise Bill became law. We have said neither one nor the other. We have never refused any request or suggestion to proceed with re-distribution during the present year. We have said that we should not proceed with the plan of re-distribution, until in our judgment the fate of the Franchise Bill had been secured. But that is a very

different thing. That security may become apparent at one or at another stage of the progress of a measure through Parliament, according as circumstances happen, which can only be judged of at the moment. But as to the necessary postponement of the Re-distribution Bill for another year, we have not said anything of the sort. I myself, in the name of the Government, distinctly pointed out that if it were the pleasure of the House, in its anxiety for a prompt settlement of the whole subject of Reform, to prolong its sittings during the autumn, the Government would not be the parties to object. But, strange to say, although that offer was intelligibly stated, not a single one of the Gentlemen, who are so keen for considering re-distribution together with the question of the Franchise, has let fall one syllable showing a disposition to agree to that proposal. We said that in our opinion the re-distribution of Seats formed an essential part of Reform; we said that the political engagement, on which we stake our existence as a Government, is not confined to the Franchise Bill, but extends to the subject of re-distribution; and we said that the process of re-distribution, if there were a mind to undertake it with promptitude and dispose of it with despatch, should not be intercepted by any tardiness or laziness of ours. We are taunted, and not altogether unjustly, by the right honourable Gentleman opposite (Mr. Disraeli) with having changed our front, because we have made this further concession, in order to meet the views of Gentlemen whom we believe to be united with ourselves in the object that we have in view, that we will lay the Bill for the re-distribution of Seats upon the table, before asking the House to go into Committee upon the Bill relating to the Franchise. And now, Sir,

I may fairly ask, what more is desired? Let us hear what is asked; in order that we may consider whether, compatibly with the main design we have in view, we can give our assent to the demand. The noble Lord the Member for King's Lynn says, "Give us a guarantee that if the Franchise Bill passes, the Re-distribution Bill shall also pass." Is the noble Lord so much afraid of the consequences of failure, as to forget that if our plan of re-distribution fails the Government must fail with it, and consequently that, if he is so keen for re-distribution, he can come into power himself and carry some plan of his own? The noble Lord, it seems, is afraid of a dissolution. But there can, I think, be nothing more obvious than this, that the Government, having produced these two Bills, will have every conceivable motive of a selfish kind for avoiding a dissolution, until both the one and the other shall have passed. For while we shall have conciliated a few, on the other hand—proceed as cautiously as we may—we shall have offended many. If you think we may have some favour and interest with the constituencies likely to be enfranchised, it is in your power to gain as great an interest in them, should you but have the wisdom and forethought to desist from the course that you are now pursuing, and to show a little less mistrust of them, of that portion of your fellow-countrymen; should you, for example, henceforward refrain from insisting, that to allow them to possess the Franchise is to Americanize the institutions of the country.

I wish, Sir, to be clearly understood upon the question connected with the form and manner of proceeding with the measure, especially after it has been repeatedly stated in debate that there are various rumours circulat

ing in the House. I believe there are Gentlemen who desire of us more than we have promised to do; who are not satisfied with our having said that the Re-distribution Bill should be placed in their possession immediately after the second reading of the measure that is now before them. Let me endeavour, then, to be clear upon this subject. Our object is to draw a separation broadly and unequivocally between those who really desire a reduction of the Franchise in counties, and, above all, in boroughs, and those who do not, but who are apparently disposed to make use of the question of the re-distribution of Seats, and of every other topic, for the purpose of concealing their hostility, and yet of effectively prosecuting their opposition to the reduction of the Franchise. Now, Sir, I have to say that the Government will be loth to quarrel upon any mere question of procedure with any Gentleman, in whom we recognise a community of object and purpose with ourselves. If Gentlemen have but the same end in view, we shall have every disposition, as far as we can contrive it, to adopt the same means. We hold every subject of procedure to be wholly secondary to the purpose for which it is intended. What we cannot do, however, is this; we cannot undertake to abandon the ground we have gained, for, in my opinion, we have gained ground. We will not undertake to forego the fruit of those labours, which the House has bestowed on the subject during that part of the Session which is past; and we cannot undertake to waste that portion of the Session which is yet to come. We will not, as far as depends upon us, either encourage or endure mere procrastination. I must in the plainest manner convey to my noble Friend the Member for Chester that we will

be no parties to procrastination; and that no concealment shall subsist if we have the power to pierce it through, and to unveil to the public whatever may lie beneath. That, Sir, is the state of the case with regard to our intentions upon what may happen after the second reading of this Bill.

Now, Sir, in a great question like this, it is well understood what is really involved in the second reading. Let it be clearly understood that we are not now debating the rejection or acceptance of clauses secondary with reference to the main purpose of the Bill. It is no question of Savings Banks, it is no question of the dockyard suffrage; nor is it even a question concerning the votes of leaseholders in counties. And here I will, in passing, make an admission to my right honourable Friend, the Member for North Staffordshire. He has certainly surprised me by the number of votes which he believes would be added to the Register of a particular division of a county under the operation of this clause. I do not know that his estimate is precisely correct; I may have occasion to question it. We have proposed the clause I am referring to under the belief that, as a general and almost universal rule, the number of those leaseholding votes will be comparatively small. If that be not so, it is a question undoubtedly open to re-consideration.

Nor, of course, are we at this moment asking of any Gentleman to pledge himself as to the particular figure, at which he will fix the reduced franchise in counties, nor even in boroughs. We do not conceal our intentions, especially about the suffrage in towns. We do not hold out the smallest expectation that we shall deviate from our position in this respect; we cannot

depart from it. But that is not the point to be decided to-night. The point we are to decide to-night is whether the House will, by a majority, vote for the second reading of this Bill—that is to say, for a measure affirming the reduction of the franchise in counties, and especially in towns. That is the question. ("No, no!") It may not be the question in the estimation of the honourable Gentleman; but it seems not improper that those who move the second reading of a Bill should at any rate put the House in possession of what they know to be the intentions of the movers, and what they believe to be, and, so far as depends on them, intend should be, the true significance of the vote for which they ask. Have we, then, good reason for asking that this Bill should be read a second time, in lieu of adopting the Motion of the noble Earl? I think we have very sound reasons for asking it. They are these. We gave notice that we would introduce a measure of Reform, and we produced the Bill. We were saluted by my noble Friend with a hostile Motion, and a Motion framed in concert with the party in Opposition. On a former occasion I endeavoured to do justice to the moderation of my noble Friend's character. I wish now to bear testimony also to the moderation and mildness of his language. But the moderation and mildness of his language cannot blind the Government to the severity of his act. He spoke of his being a follower of Earl Russell; but the Amendment, coming as it does from my noble Friend, has been concerted with the party opposite. (An honourable MEMBER: I do not believe it was.) I am bound to say that I am unable to recognise the honourable Member as the leader of the party opposite. I recognise the right honourable Gentleman the Member

for Bucks as filling that position, and no one else. But, returning to the Amendment; I am not aware of any case, within our Parliamentary experience, or of any case whatever, in which a Government has consented to accept such an Amendment, so prepared and so produced. I frankly own that if I were to be dragged at the chariot-wheels of any man, I would be as willing to be dragged at the chariot-wheels of my noble Friend, as at those of any one whom I have the honour to know. But that is a process to which a Government cannot, and must not, submit. I marked the words of my noble Friend, as he looked back at his own conduct in 1859. He was then so zealous for a reduction of the borough franchise, that he would not hear of the proposal to read the Bill of that day a second time, because it did not propose such reduction. My noble Friend now repents of that refusal. He says it was a very unwise proceeding. He holds that, having then before them a Government which had introduced a Reform Bill, and which was pledged to stand or fall by it, to stop the Government in its career was not the way to promote the cause of Reform. Yet, strange inconsistency of human nature, not peculiar to my noble Friend, but only too common in the annals of casuistry and of conscience! for a moment, and with evident sincerity, he repents; but, at the same moment, the temptation again presents itself; and again he falls. In the very act of making the confession, he revives and repeats the offence. My noble Friend now in truth asks the House to do over again what he laments that he did in 1859. We, on our part, ask that our Bill may be read a second time. Is our request an unfair one? My right honour-

able Friend the Member for Calne quoted yesterday, and with great effect, a phrase which has been used by Mr. Hallam. Mr. Hallam says very truly that Ministers have a double allegiance; an allegiance to the Crown, and an allegiance to this House. It is their business, in submitting their measures to the judgment of the House, to consider what their own honour requires; but it is also their duty, in deciding as they best can what is expedient for the public interests, to consider what may be required for the honour, dignity, and efficiency of the House. Well, Sir, after all that has happened; after the many Bills which have been brought in; after the many unforeseen obstacles, ending in miscarriage; after the equivocal and questionable proceedings that have at times been taken with reference to these measures, and the jealousies and reproaches, which the public do not understand, but of which they see the effect in the total stoppage of the movement of Reform; we have deliberately thought that we were entitled, nay that we were bound, to ask the House for an answer on the broad question respecting a reduction of the Franchise in counties and boroughs; a question which cannot be affected in its substance by any course that we can pursue with regard to the re-distribution of Seats. That is what we have thought; and I think I may ask my noble Friend whether we are not perfectly entitled to ask for that answer, with reference not to our own convenience, or even our own credit, but to the honour, dignity, and efficiency of the House itself.

Sir, there was a wish expressed by one of the heroes of that ancient war to which my right honourable Friend and myself have so often referred, a wish

eminently suitable to the present position of Her Majesty's Government. It is this—

"Let us die in the daylight."

Now, I humbly ask of my noble Friend, that we may die in the daylight. My noble Friend's hostility to this Bill—the fact of such hostility is, I fear, notorious, for it was pretty intelligibly declared in his address to his constituents—is not founded upon the circumstance of its not containing clauses for re-distribution, but on the fact of its being a Bill for an effective reduction of the Franchise in boroughs. My noble Friend differs vitally from the Government on that subject. I do not complain of that difference of opinion. On the contrary, I honour him for acting according to his own convictions. But I do not think it too much to ask that he should state it in plain words. He asks, however, for a Re-distribution Bill, to be joined with the Franchise Bill. But suppose a Re-distribution Bill of an unobjectionable character were introduced, would my noble Friend then support the Franchise Bill?—I think that is a fair challenge. I think that upon the answer to that challenge, or upon the non-answer to it, which will mean pretty much the same thing, the judgment of the House and of the country may very well be taken.

The right honourable Gentleman the Member for Calne has said, that we have given no reasons for our Bill; and he likewise said that we know nothing of those two hundred and four thousand persons, whom it is proposed to enfranchise in boroughs; indeed, as I think, he repeated the assertion several times. What, Sir, do we know nothing of those two hundred and four thousand? If we are thus ignorant, yet does my right

honourable Friend know nothing of them? We were taught to think he knew a good deal about them. We have not yet wholly forgotten his own significant words so loudly cheered: "We know what sort of men live in these houses." My right honourable Friend will recollect the words well enough. They were used in his first speech. They formed part of his declamatory denunciation against the admission of any class below the ten-pound voters to the Franchise. Nor was this all. Who were those Hyperboreans of the speech of my right honourable Friend? And what was the wind that got colder as the traveller went further north? Was not the comparison this—that as on the earth's surface the cold increases as we move in that direction, so in the downward figures of the Franchise the voters became progressively more drunken, or more venal; or, to refrain from recalling those unhappy words, I would say simply more and more unfit? Now, Sir, we too know something of those men; but what we know is very different from the supposed knowledge of my right honourable Friend. The right honourable Gentleman asked, "Do you think the Franchise is good in itself, or do you wish to improve the institutions of the country?" Sir, I find here no dilemma. My answer to both questions is, emphatically, Aye! The extension of the Franchise, within safe and proper limits, is good, in and of itself. It will array more persons in support of the institutions of the country; and that is another good. The composition and the working of this House is admirable, and its performances have long since placed it at the head of all the legislative assemblies of the world. It does not follow, however, that it cannot be improved. I will not say with my right honourable Friend that it is perfect. I am not sure, indeed, that

he said so in terms; but he seemed to mean if not to say it. I am not prepared to pay the worship of idolatry, even to this House. I will mention a point of far-reaching importance, in which I think it might be improved. It is this. I need not say I am scarcely speaking of the present House, which has but just entered upon its labours. I am speaking of the Reformed Parliament in general. There is a saying which has been ascribed to a very eminent person, still alive, whose name I will not mention, because I have no means of knowing whether it has been truly ascribed to him or not, but I will quote it for its own sake. It is to this effect, that the unreformed Parliament used, in the common phrase, to job for individuals, while the reformed Parliament jobs for classes. I do not adopt the rudeness of the expression; but the substance of the observation is, in my opinion, just. I think that the influence of separate classes is here too strong; and that the influence of the public interest properly so called, as distinguished from the interests of sets, groups, and knots of men, is too weak. I fully admit I am not, perhaps, altogether an impartial judge. I speak much from my own experience, during a lengthened period, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and as in a special degree and sense the guardian of the public purse. Undoubtedly, if there be a weak point in the composition of the House, this is the department in which it would most readily and most clearly show itself. I believe it to be a weak point. I believe that the composition of the House might be greatly improved; and that the increased representation of the working classes would supply us more largely with that description of Members whom we want; of Members who would look

not to the interests of classes, but to the public interest. In presuming to say so much as this, I hope I do not convey any reproach to any party or person; but my right honourable Friend (Mr. Lowe) challenged us so sharply, as if we admitted that no improvement whatever was possible, that I felt bound thus far to state in general terms my conviction.

Again, Sir, I return to the broad proposition of my right honourable Friend. He says we have no reasons. Perhaps he does not admit as a reason what was stated the other day by the honourable Member for Birmingham, that there have been a hundred meetings, public meetings, held in favour of this Bill. I observed, when those words were spoken, that loud murmurs arose on the other side of the House at the mention of the number; and I have not the least doubt of their good faith. I, however, was persuaded that the honourable Member for Birmingham was right; and turning to the Report of the Committee on Public Petitions, I counted the meetings. (An Opposition MEMBER: Got up!) The meetings are "got up" are they? Then you have your remedy. Go, and get up meetings against the measure. It will then be seen, whether it is or is not an easy matter to obtain an expression of public sentiment like this, on which to found your operations. I know not whether they are "got up" or not; if Gentlemen think they are, it is, as I have said, open to them who think so to try the experiment the other way. But this I know, that I counted roughly the petitions presented from public meetings, and signed individually by the chairmen of these meetings; and I found that between the 11th and the 17th of April there were about one hundred and eighty-seven such petitions, be-

sides five or six hundred thousand signatures from individuals in favour of this Bill. So much then, Sir, I say as respects that description of argument which may with fairness be drawn, within certain bounds, from the evident and expressed opinion of the country.

But now I have to grapple with the principal argument, if such it be, of my right honourable Friend the Member for Calne, and to confront all the dismal pictures he draws of the destruction of the British Constitution. My answer is, that it is not going to be destroyed. We are not going to import American principles. It is not necessary to discuss them, either for blame or praise. It is not an American principle to reduce the borough franchise. It is a return to old English principles; it is a restoration of the state and course of things that subsisted before, and ought to subsist again. What has happened since 1832? I am now going to state a part of the case on the authority of the right honourable Gentleman the Member for Oxfordshire (Mr. Henley):—

"The working people have been having a less and less share in the representation. They had a considerable representation before 1832, through the scot-and-lot voters and the freemen. I am not going to say anything either for or against the freemen; but through them the working class had their voice in the representation. They are gradually dying out."—[3 *Hansard*, clii. 1066.]

That was the emphatic statement of the right honourable Gentleman in 1859; and has it been counteracted since? No; it has not been counteracted, certainly not to any considerable extent, not even, as I believe, in the least degree. I will now state the growth of

the numbers of electors in boroughs. And not generally since 1832, for when I stated what it had been from 1832 to 1865, I gave an unjust advantage to my opponents; but since 1851. Now, I pray the House to observe these figures, which I am about to give. In 1851, the total number of the electors in boroughs was four hundred and ten thousand; in 1865-6 it was five hundred and nine thousand, showing an increase of ninety-nine thousand: that is to say, an increase of twenty-four per cent. in fourteen years. That, then, has been the increase in the number of the electors. I come next to the increase of population in boroughs. In the year 1851 it was seven million one hundred and eighty-six thousand; in 1866 it was by estimate nine million two hundred and sixty-six thousand, giving an increase of two million seventy-nine thousand, or, in other words, of 28·9 per cent. in the population. That being so, I ask those Gentlemen who speak of the gradual absorption of the working classes into the constituencies, and of the Franchise as being within their reach, to consider, to deal with these figures. We now see that we have actually a slower growth of the electors in boroughs, than of the population. Well, but while the population and the electors have been moving on as I have described, the wealth of the country among the middle and upper classes has, according to the best estimate which I can make, been advancing as follows. The income tax in 1851, making due allowance for the changes which have been since introduced into the law, may be taken, with sufficient approach to accuracy for the purpose of comparison, as having been worth not more than eight hundred and fifty thousand pounds per penny. This year I am enabled to state that it is

worth one million four hundred thousand pounds per penny. That is to say, there has been an increase of sixty-five per cent. in the wealth of the country liable to income tax, or at the rate of four per cent. per annum. But when I remind you, that this vast increase of the wealth liable to income tax has been an increase almost entirely in the upper and middle classes, and yet that the total number of electors in the towns does not even keep pace with the population, I hope we shall hear no more of this supposed absorption of the working classes into the enfranchised body. In the figures before us, it is too plain that there is no room for any such absorption. I was justified, then, in stating that the working classes are not adequately represented in this House, even as compared with 1832. They are not, it is admitted, represented in any proportion to their numbers; and without holding that it would be fit for us to do more than lessen that disproportion, we contend it is right to do as much. They are not represented, as I have previously shown, in accordance with their share of the income of the country. Especially after the events of the last few years, I may boldly proceed to say they are not represented in proportion to their intelligence, their virtue, or their loyalty. Finally, they are less represented now than they were thirty-six years ago, when they were admittedly less competent to exercise the Franchise. A greater amount of representation, with a less amount of fitness, was not found to be injurious, but wholesome, for the State; and now, when, as you admit, there is a greater amount of fitness, and, as you must grant, there is a less amount of representation, still you are not disposed, it seems, to accede to a further measure of enfranchisement.

If these are not good reasons for extending the suffrage at the present time, I know not what reasons can be good. But if honourable Members think they can hold their ground in a policy of resistance and refusal for the present, I have to ask them, how do they regard the future? My right honourable Friend the Member for Calne has prophesied to us, in the most emphatic terms, the ruin of the British Constitution. His prophecies were beautiful, so far as his masterly use of the English language is concerned. But many prophecies quite as impressive may be found in the pages of Mr. Burke or of Mr. Canning, and other almost equally distinguished men. What has been the fate of those prophecies? What uses do they now serve? They form admirable material of declamations for schoolboys; capital exercises to be translated into Greek. The prophecies of my right honourable Friend, like those of yet more famous men than he, may some thirty years hence serve a similar purpose. They may, for the beauty, force, and clearness of their language, be selected by teachers at colleges and schools as exercises for their pupils; and my right honourable Friend will have his reward, as others have had theirs: *Ut pueris placeas, et declamatio fias.* My right honourable Friend says, does he? that we know nothing about the labouring classes. Is not one single word a sufficient reply? That word is Lancashire; Lancashire, associated with the sufferings of the last four years, so painful and bitter in themselves to contemplate, but so nobly and gloriously borne. The qualities then exhibited were the qualities not of a few men here and there, select among a depraved multitude, but of the mass of a toiling community. The sufferings were sufferings of the mass.

The heroism was heroism of the mass. For my own part, I cannot believe that the men who exhibited those qualities were a false sample of the people of England, and that the rest would have wholly failed in exhibiting the same great qualities, had occasion arisen. I cannot see what argument could be found for some wise and temperate experiment of the extension of civil rights among such people, if the experience of the past few years does not sufficiently afford it.

And now, Sir, let us for a moment consider the enormous and silent changes which have been going forward among the labouring population. May I use the words to honourable and right honourable Gentlemen once used by way of exhortation by Sir Robert Peel to his opponents? "Elevate your vision." Let us try and raise our view somewhat above the fears, the suspicions, the jealousies, the reproaches, and the recriminations of this place and this occasion. Let us look onward to the time of our children, and of our children's children. Let us examine what preparation it behoves us should be made to meet that coming time. Is there or is there not, I ask, a steady movement discernible in the labouring class, and is or is not that movement a movement onwards, and a movement upwards? I will not say that it falls beneath the eye; for, like all great processes, it is unobservable in detail; but as solid and undeniable, as it is resistless, in its essential character. It is like those movements of the crust of the earth, which science tells us are even now going on in certain portions of the globe. The sailor courses over these regions in his ship, and the traveller crosses them by land, without being conscious of such changes; but from day to day, from hour to hour, the heaving forces

are at work, and after a season we discern from actual experience that the levels are changed by elevation and depression, that things are not as they were. Has my right honourable Friend, in whom mistrust rises to its utmost height, ever really considered the astonishing phenomena connected with some portion of the conduct of the labouring classes, especially in the Lancashire distress? Has he considered what an amount of self-denial was exhibited by these men in respect to the American war? They knew that the source of their distress, of their crushing distress, lay in that war; yet they never uttered or entertained the wish that any effort should be made to put an end to it, as they held it, correctly or erroneously it matters not, to be a war for justice and for freedom. Could any man have believed that a conviction so still, so calm, so firm, so energetic, could have planted itself in the minds of a population, without becoming a known patent fact throughout the whole country? But we knew nothing of it. And yet, when the day of trial came, then we saw that noble sympathy on their part with the people of the North; that determination that, be their sufferings what they might, no word should proceed from them that would hurt a cause which they so firmly believed to be just. On one side, then, there was a magnificent moral spectacle. On the other side was there not also a great lesson to us all, to teach us that in those little tutored, but yet most reflective minds, by a process of quiet instillation, opinions and sentiments gradually form themselves of which we for a long time remain unaware, but which, when at last they make their appearance, are found to be deep-rooted, mature, and ineradicable?

And now, Sir, I turn to another matter, and I ask

my noble Friend, how he proposes to administer the government of that singularly associated family of persons, who adopt his Amendment? There ought to be some unity of purpose among those friends and associates, who have linked themselves together on a question such as this; among those who design to overturn Governments, or to destroy Reform Bills. I will state a portion of the contradictions that are to be gathered out of this debate on one side only. My noble Friend says we ought to have referred this question to the Committee of Privy Council. But the right honourable Member for the University of Cambridge (Mr. Walpole) tells him, and tells him truly, that it would be totally useless; firstly, it would do no good; and secondly, it would be entirely unconstitutional. That is the first specimen I give. Next, my right honourable Friend (Mr. Walpole) says we ought to have introduced a measure of re-distribution; but the right honourable Gentleman the Member for Stroud, and the honourable Member for Galway, say they would have been content, the one to support our Franchise Bill, and both of them to entertain and to discuss it, if only we had said nothing about re-distribution. Again, my honourable Friend, the Member for Wick, says we ought to proceed with the two Bills *pari passu;* but my right honourable Friend, the Member for Cambridge University, says, and supports his opinion with sound reasoning to show, that such a course of proceeding would only involve increased delay. The right honourable Member for Calne again avows, that such a course would remove none of his objections. The right honourable Member for Bucks, I think, says the same; and yet the honourable Member for Wick announces that, if only we will adopt his advice, he

will answer for our obtaining every vote on the Liberal side of the House. The honourable and learned Member for Belfast thinks, that representation is founded on classes. My right honourable Friend (Mr. Walpole) replies, "No, it is not founded on classes, but on communities." The honourable and learned Member for Belfast says fitness is not a ground for enfranchisement; and the right honourable Baronet the Member for Herts proclaims not merely that he would be satisfied, but, with emphatic and expressive gesture, that he would be delighted, if every artizan who is fit for the Franchise could be admitted to it. The noble Lord the Member for Galway (Lord Dunkellin) not only declares his adhesion to Reform, but states that it is in the capacity of an ardent Reformer that he objects to our measure; while the right honourable and gallant General the Member for Huntingdon (General Peel) frames a catalogue of the mischiefs we have had to endure during the Reforming era, and pretty plainly considers that we have had not only enough of Reform in Parliament, but even a little more than enough. The honourable Member for Cambridge holds, I think very truly, that Parliament is pledged in this matter. Not, of course, to do what it may think wrong; nobody ever said anything so absurd; but what is meant is this, that those pledges of Parliament are pledges which, if they are not observed, will cause discredit to Parliament, and will tend to the disparagement of Parliamentary Government with the people of this country. But while my right honourable Friend owns that Parliament is pledged, the honourable Member for Dublin and the right honourable Member for Bucks have laboured to demonstrate that it is under no pledge whatever. Lastly, Sir, the noble Lord the

Member for Haddingtonshire protests he is an ardent friend of Reform. I will not contradict him; that would not be agreeable to good manners; neither will I even cite against him the words of any other Gentleman. But I will cite his own words and opinions. I conceive that in his judgment—a most untrue and injurious judgment as I think—he has contradicted himself; because, while he has thus declared his friendliness to Reform, he has also avowedly and pointedly, I might almost say ostentatiously, gloried in Lord Palmerston as being a man whose life, if it had only been prolonged, would have effectually kept at bay any new Reform Bill. That, Sir, which I have represented in these references, is the state of self-contradiction among this party; a party gathered together for a chance purpose; with no bond of cohesion, with no declared principle, with no avowed intention; meaning, as I must repeat, one thing and saying another thing; saying that which is of comparatively small account, and not saying, but suppressing, the thing which the most important persons engaged in the operation deeply feel, and which they would wish to say. Such is the state of things among our present opponents. Such is their harmony of language, their unity of view, upon this the first and only occasion on which they have been able to co-operate.

Sir, the hour has arrived when this protracted debate must come to an end. [Cheers.] I cannot resent the warmth with which that last expression of mine has been re-echoed. My apologies to the House are sincere. I feel deeply indebted, not to Gentlemen sitting on this side of the House only, but also and not less to honourable Gentlemen opposite, for the patience with which

they have heard me. But a very few words more, and I have done. May I speak briefly to honourable Gentlemen on the other side, as some of them have copiously addressed advice to Gentlemen on this side of the House? I would ask them, will you not consider, before you embark in this new crusade, whether the results of those other political crusades, in which you have heretofore engaged, have been so satisfactory to you as to encourage you to a new venture in the same direction? Great battles you have fought; and fought them manfully. The battle of maintaining civil disabilities on account of religious belief; the battle of resistance to the first Reform Act; the obstinate and long-continued battle of Protection; all these great battles have been fought by the great party that I now look in the face; and, as to some limited portion of those conflicts, I admit my own share of the responsibility. But I ask again, have their results, have their results towards yourselves, been such as that you should be disposed to renew struggles similar to these? Certainly those, who compose the Liberal party in British politics, have, at least in that capacity, no reason or title to find fault. The effect of your course has been to give over to your adversaries for five out of every six, or for six out of every seven years, since the epoch of the Reform Act, the conduct and management of public affairs. The effect has been to lower, to reduce, and contract your just influence in the country, and to abridge your legitimate share in the administration of the Government. It is good for the public interest that you also should be strong. But if you are to be strong, you can only be so by showing, in addition to the kindness and the

personal generosity which I am sure you feel towards the people, a public, a political trust and confidence in the people. What I now say can hardly be said with an evil motive. I am conscious of no such sentiment towards any man or any party. But, Sir, we are assailed, and with us the Bill, of which we think more seriously than of our ourselves. This Bill is in a state of crisis and of peril, and the Government along with it. We stand or fall with it, as has been declared by my noble Friend Lord Russell. We stand with it now; we may fall with it a short time hence. If we do so fall, we, or others in our places, shall rise with it hereafter. I shall not attempt to measure with precision the forces that are to be arrayed against us in the coming issue. Perhaps the great division of to-night is not to be the last, but only the first of a series of divisions. At some point of the contest you may possibly succeed. You may drive us from our seats. You may slay, you may bury, the measure that we have introduced. But we will write upon its gravestone for an epitaph this line, with certain confidence in its fulfilment:

"Exoriere aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor."

You cannot fight against the future. Time is on our side. The great social forces which move onwards in their might and majesty, and which the tumult of these debates does not for a moment impede or disturb, those great social forces are against you; they work with us; they are marshalled in our support. And the banner which we now carry in the fight, though perhaps, at some moment of the struggle, it may droop over our sinking heads yet will float again in the eye of heaven,

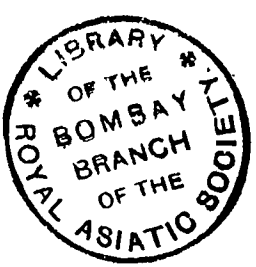
and will be borne by the firm hands of the united people of the three kingdoms, perhaps not to an easy, but to a certain and to a not distant victory.

Question put.

The House *divided*:—Ayes 318; Noes 313: Majority 5.

Main question put, and *agreed to.*

Bill read a second time, and *committed* for *Monday* next.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RE-DISTRIBUTION OF SEATS BILL.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: I rise, Sir, to ask for leave to bring in a Bill for the Re-distribution of Seats. And though my duty will not, I hope, require me to detain the House for any great length of time, yet I must commence by pointing out that I shall have to advert to three several subjects—first, to the re-distribution of Seats, properly so called; secondly, to certain questions as to the provisions, which are most fitting and convenient to be made with regard to the boundaries of Parliamentary boroughs; and thirdly, I must deal with that question of the procedure upon these Bills upon which so much has been said, and with regard to which so much interest has been excited.

Now, Sir, first as regards the Re-distribution of Seats. I will say a word, at the commencement, as to the principles upon which such a re-distribution should proceed. And I must say on behalf of my colleagues and for myself that we have never seen any room for doubt or any reason to entertain any desire for innovation, or for departure from previous example, with regard to these principles. There are, indeed, in detail an almost boundless number of questions that may be, some plausibly, and some fairly, raised, if there be a disposition to raise them, in disposing of the subject of re-distribution. And there may also be a fair difference of opinion as to the scale upon which those principles shall be applied. The process is a double one; first of all

there is the process of disfranchisement, of the withdrawal or curtailment of the privilege of representation in Parliament; and secondly, there is the process of enfranchisement. I do not think that, as to either the one or the other, there has ever been, either in this House, or among the various Governments that have dealt with the subject, any vital difference of opinion entertained, or at least avowed, as to the principles upon which these two processess should be worked. In every case in which a Bill for the Re-distribution of Seats has been brought in, whether in 1854, in 1859, or in 1860, the seats which it was necessary to obtain have been obtained not by extinguishing, but by limiting the principle of the representation of small boroughs. To that method of proceeding, I need scarcely say, we shall adhere.

Now, Sir, with respect to the subject of small boroughs, it is well that we should give the House to understand with what view, and in what sense, we propose to deal with them. There is an impression that is too widely spread perhaps in the opinion, at least in the superficial opinion—if I may so speak—of the public, that by this sort of either extinction or restraint of the representation of the small boroughs, to be introduced into a Re-distribution of Seats Bill, we may serve an invaluable purpose, that of putting a stop to corruption in Parliamentary elections.

Now, Sir, no person, so far as I am aware, who has ever been cognizant of this subject in a responsible capacity, has thought of carrying the process of re-distribution of Seats, or of an extinction or restraint of small boroughs, to any point which would make it in any manner effectual for the purpose of putting a stop

to Parliamentary corruption. And, indeed, in order to correspond in any degree with such an aim, we must attach to the name of a small borough a signification far wider than any which it has hitherto ordinarily borne. When we speak of small boroughs, while there is no precise definition of the class, perhaps we may be understood generally to mean towns that are under eight thousand, nine thousand, ten thousand, or twelve thousand inhabitants, according to the shades of meaning which people may attach to the term. But it is not the fact that corruption in this country is exclusively to be found in boroughs under, say, ten thousand in population. It is not even the fact that corruption—so far as I understand the matter—is especially to be found in those boroughs. I believe that, as far as this subject is capable of being illustrated by Returns, it will be shown that, at least if you take for your test boroughs which have been the subject of Parliamentary investigation, on the score of allegations of bribery, during a considerable number of years, not only, nor perhaps mainly, the boroughs from the very lowest figure up to ten thousand in population, but those from ten thousand to twenty thousand in a very considerable degree, and then, again, those from twenty thousand up to forty thousand, if not even higher, would be found—melancholy as it is to me to make the confession—to be tainted with this most disgraceful vice, this leprosy of English politics. Therefore, in proposing a limitation of the representation of small boroughs, which has, in point of fact, been the basis of every scheme suggested for the re-distribution of Seats, we must not attempt to recommend such a scheme upon the supposition that it has of itself an effectual tendency to the extermination of the evil of

corruption. No doubt it will in part have this effect; it may strike at certain boroughs, which, being small, are also corrupt; and perhaps we may carry our opinion with justice so far as to say that, where a small borough is corrupt, it is more difficult to cure the evil than in a large borough, because there is less of sound public opinion in the constituency to which you can appeal. And again, the seat so withdrawn is sure to be given to a constituency less likely to misuse its power.

On the other hand, Sir, there has been in former time (at least, as far as I know) a widely spread opinion that, as the small boroughs were liable to the special demerit of corruption, so also they were entitled to claim the special merit of opening the door of this House to some classes of representatives, who could not otherwise find their way within its precinct. I have already distinctly stated in this House my opinion that, in former times and circumstances, small boroughs did very extensively serve that purpose, especially in one particular mode. They introduced into this House a very important class of young men, whose family connections were not of such a nature as effectually to recommend them to the confidence of large constituencies, as candidates who might in the first instance be taken upon trust. In other words, of young men sent here on account of their own opening promise: a class which has supplied a large proportion of the governing minds of this great country. Now, however, the large constituencies, especially those of counties, much to their credit and to the advantage of the country, are usually willing to return as their representatives young men belonging to families which have traditionally enjoyed their respect, and to look to them

with hopes for the future. Thus, an opening is found for the younger members of families of rank, birth, and opulence. But how do we stand as to youths sprung from families which have not these advantages?

I am bound to own that, having particularly watched the working of our small boroughs, especially during the last two general elections, and having now just striven to exempt them in some degree from an especial censure, I do not think we can urge, testing the matter by experience, that the small boroughs now possess that special advantage in a degree corresponding with former periods, or indeed in any degree beyond other classes of constituencies. Suppose we were to take the cases of gentlemen—it would be invidious, perhaps, to refer to names—but suppose we were to take the cases of gentlemen who, in a Parliamentary sense, might be justly considered young: and I conceive that Parliamentary youth need not be held to expire before thirty. I say, then, taking the case of gentlemen not yet above thirty years of age, elected within the last ten years or more, or, to bring the matter more closely to a test, taking those only who now sit here, whether on the one side or the other, and who have not come into Parliament through the direct exercise of family influence, or through the credit and position of their families in the places which they represent, I think there is not more than one single instance in which an honourable Gentleman at that happy time of life, and of the class I have named, can be said to hold his seat for a small borough at the present moment. [An honourable MEMBER: There is not one.] Yes, there is one. I think there is one instance,* and only one, as far as my researches have

* The case of Mr. Goldsmid, M.P. for Honiton.

gone, that too being one in which special circumstances may have had an influence upon the election, in which such a gentleman can be said to hold his seat for a small borough, understanding by a small borough one under ten thousand in population. All the rest sit for larger, chiefly for much larger places. One of them I may name; for it can only be named with honour. And moreover I draw it from the opposite side. It is the seat held by an honourable Member, who entered this House some four or five years ago as the representative of Canterbury, a place with a population, I think, of from twenty to thirty thousand. Singular then although it may be, and contrary to all anticipations, it does not appear that the larger constituencies are, in the present state of things, more indisposed to entertain the claims of young men who have no traditional or family influence, and who have not yet had an opportunity of making a political character for themselves, than are the very small boroughs. They are, on the contrary, it would seem, rather more favourably, or less unfavourably, inclined to return this important class of our Members.

It is neither then, I think, upon the ground of any special utility, according to the working of our present system, that the general retention of small boroughs can be effectually defended: nor, on the other hand, is it on the ground of special corruption that their extinction can be sufficiently recommended. I submit that we must be prepared to take our stand upon the following very clear and simple ground. There are large and important communities, many of them growing communities, both in counties and in towns, others of them stationary; but having the one feature in common, that

they are not represented within the walls of this House in any sort of proportion to what we may fairly call their just demands. If we are to search for a method of making the representation of those great communities more adequate, it is quite clear, I think, that we can most adequately obtain, and, in fact, can only obtain, the means of meeting the fair demands of justice and of growing populations, by resorting to a curtailment of the still very abundant, and, indeed, superabundant, measure of representation of small boroughs, which continues to mark our system.

Having said so much, Sir, I may now proceed to state, that it has been a great object with the Government to consider in what way they can most conveniently and most equitably apply this principle to the small boroughs of the country. At the time of the Reform Bill, there were a great many boroughs which could not be dealt with except by way of extinction, and, indeed, which had become in the public view intolerable, as little better than a mockery of the representative system. Among those boroughs were not only Gatton and Old Sarum, but many others, which besides being small and insignificant, were moreover so entirely close, that the mass of the population, even within those insignificant boroughs themselves, possessed no interest in their representatives. It would have been quite absurd to have sought any means of retaining such boroughs upon the list of those returning representatives to Parliament, whether by joining them with other places less unworthy, or in any other way. A great change was introduced into this state of things by the Reform Act; and every borough, however small or

however ill-constituted it may be, has, at all events, this to say in its own behalf; that the Member, who sits for it, does in some way or other represent the views, as well as the interests, of a real local community. We therefore approach the question of restraining the representation of the small boroughs under circumstances somewhat different from those which the framers of the Reform Act had to confront in their treatment of the same subject. These local communities are, as we find, in possession of great Parliamentary privileges; but they are not, as we believe, extensively tainted with gross corruption. Those of them which are, or shall be proved upon adequate evidence to be so tainted, will, I hope, be effectually and decisively dealt with by the House; and I may diverge from my path for one moment to express the hope that, even in the case of any larger boroughs where this corruption is proved to exist, the House will adopt measures entirely different from those which we pursued some Sessions back, so feeble and inefficient in their character: measures in some degree at least commensurate with the gravity of the offence, and such as, it is to be hoped, may have a tendency to check, both there and elsewhere, the prevalence of the evil. I think, however, that the class of small boroughs ought not, as a class, to be regarded as being charged with this loathsome taint, but as being in possession of Parliamentary privileges which are brought into question through no voluntary fault of their own. Whatever abridgment, then, is to be imposed upon those privileges, that abridgment ought to be effected in the mildest manner possible; and consequently, departing from the principle which guided many of those sitting in the present Cabinet when they framed the

Bill of 1854, we have come to the conclusion that the equity of the case will be fully met by a course somewhat less disagreeable.

We therefore propose, that no borough shall be absolutely extinguished; and in lieu of extinction of boroughs, or enumeration in what was called Schedule A, we purpose resorting to a method new, or rather almost new, to England, but one of which the principle has been already very fully adopted in Scotland and in Wales, that of arranging small boroughs in groups. And, Sir, there is another reason which has, I think, weighed with the Government in arriving at this conclusion. We have now had more than thirty years' experience of the Reform Act; and the whole of that experience, we are of opinion, goes to show that if any one class of boroughs, within moderate limits of population, is entitled to be selected from among the rest for the praise of at least comparative purity, it is the grouped boroughs. I doubt very much whether there have been since 1832 more than two or three petitions presented against any election for those boroughs in the kingdom of Scotland. [An honourable MEMBER: Only one!] I am told there have been two; but it really matters little whether there have been two or one, for in either case with equal justice we can say, that the annals of these boroughs are almost free from taint, so far as taint can be measured by transactions connected with election petitions, and that, after all, is the main if not the only source, from which we can derive our specific information upon this subject.

The same thing may be said, I think, with regard to the Welsh boroughs generally. And there is no doubt, when we come to examine the morbid anatomy of cor-

ruption, and the actual machinery by which its measures are adjusted and applied, as the last critical moments are approaching on a day of election, that a serious impediment to the indulgence in, or the growth of, those practices is offered by the fact that the business of the election has to be conducted simultaneously at a plurality of places. We have therefore concluded that the grouping of these boroughs will constitute a real Reform, so far as this word expresses whatever tends to freedom from corruption.

Within what limits these principles should be applied, appears to be more a question of policy, than of rigid, or at least of determinate, considerations of equity and justice. As I have stated, in the year 1854 many Members of the present Cabinet were parties to the introduction of a Bill, by which it was proposed to disfranchise nineteen boroughs altogether, and to take one Member from between thirty and forty others. We proposed, I think, to obtain sixty-four seats, or some such number, by this operation in 1854. In 1860, on the contrary, we proposed to obtain a total of only twenty-five seats, by the mild operation of taking one Member from a certain number of boroughs that were in possession of the privilege of double representation. I think it is plain that, bearing in mind the actual state of things, and the magnitude which this subject has assumed, especially under recent circumstances, in the consideration of the public, the last number is not one which would by its adoption suffice for the settlement of this question, in that reasonable and substantial sense of the word settlement which we desire. On the other hand, by going to the extent advocated by Lord Aberdeen's Government, and by disturbing so many

seats, we should, I am afraid, equally court the risk of failure. Those who, like ourselves, have looked upon the settlement of the Franchise as the question of Reform first in importance and in interest, will probably be guided to a great extent, in their treatment of the other branches of the subject, by considerations affecting the probability of arriving at that settlement.

The number of seats we propose to obtain for the purpose of re-distribution by the Bill I shall ask leave to lay upon the table of the House is forty-nine; and these are to be obtained by a double operation. Firstly, we purpose taking one Member from every borough which at present returns two representatives, and which has a population of under eight thousand. The second part of our proposal is, to group as many of these boroughs, having a population of less than eight thousand, as can be joined together with geographical convenience. It appears to us that geographical convenience forms one of the most important considerations in dealing with this subject; although the term must of course be understood with a certain latitude, and other considerations must also have a place. The consequence will be, that in some cases the group will consist of two boroughs, in others of three, and in others of four. The populations of these groups will of course differ, and according to the difference in the population we propose assigning to the group one or two Members, as the case may be. When the population amounts to less than fifteen thousand we propose to assign one representative, and when it exceeds that number we propose to give it two. I may add that the smallest population in any of these groups slightly exceeds ten thousand, and the highest is about twenty or twenty-one thousand. The Return

for which I have moved, however, will give the particulars of the plan, together with other matters affecting this subject; and these, I hope, will to-morrow morning be placed conveniently under the view of Members.

I have now, Sir, stated upon what principles these groups have been selected, and perhaps the House may desire next to learn their names. The first of the proposed groups comprises Woodstock, Wallingford, and Abingdon, and we propose that these towns unitedly shall return two Members. Bodmin, Liskeard, and Launceston will return two; Totnes, Dartmouth, and Ashburton, one; Bridport, Honiton, and Lyme Regis, one; Dorchester and Wareham, one; Maldon and Harwich, one; Cirencester, Tewkesbury, and Evesham, two; Andover and Lymington, one; Ludlow and Leominster, one; Eye and Thetford, one; Horsham, Midhurst, Petersfield, and Arundel, two; Chippenham, Malmesbury, and Calne, two; Westbury and Wells, one; Devizes and Marlborough, one; Ripon, Knaresborough, and Thirsk, two; and Richmond and Northallerton, one. In the case of eight among the towns containing populations of less than eight thousand we have not found it possible, having regard to various local reasons and to geographical convenience, to form any groups. These towns are Bridgnorth, Buckingham, Cockermouth, Hertford, Huntingdon, Lichfield, Marlow, and Newport.

We next, Sir, come to the question of enfranchisement; and here again I may say that we have already stated general rules which are sufficiently clear to leave very little room for doubt as to the general course which should be pursued. A considerable portion of the seats liberated by disfranchisement have in all cases been

assigned to divisions of counties, and there has been a tendency—and a just tendency, perhaps—rather to increase the number of seats so disposed of, in proportion as the total number set free by disfranchisement has been large. But the claims of towns have also to be considered. And these may be divided under two heads. First, we have the claims of those large urban populations, which have either reached such a point as to make it expedient to divide them, or at any rate to give them some addition to the number of their representatives; and secondly, we must consider the claims of those rising communities which, in a country like this, with a rapid and varied development of its industry and commerce, are continually coming into existence, and assuming great or appreciable shape and magnitude. Proceeding upon these principles, we propose to give twenty-six seats to counties in England. Dividing anew into two districts the southern division of the county of Lancaster, which has a population of six hundred and twenty-seven thousand, and which has three representatives at present, we propose to give three representatives to each. That leaves us twenty-three seats out of our twenty-six. We then take, with a single exception, every county, or division of a county, not already possessed of three Members, and having a population above one hundred and fifty thousand, and we ask you to give to each of them an additional Member. This arrangement exhausts the twenty-six seats, which we propose to divide among the counties. I should not forget, however, to tell the House that we have taken the Census of 1861 as our guide with respect to population, in regard both to the questions of disfranchisement, and to those of enfranchisement; and

that, when I speak of the population of counties, I exclude from them the population of existing Parliamentary boroughs, and also the estimated population of those towns which we propose to enfranchise.

I will now, Sir, read the divisions of counties to which we propose to give additional Members. The south-west division of Lancashire, comprising the hundred of West Derby, and the south-east division of Lancashire, comprising the hundred of Salford. To them we now propose to give three representatives each, and we also propose that the following should each have three Members: the northern division of Chester, and the southern division of Chester; the western division of Cornwall; the northern division of Derby; the northern division of Devon, and the southern division of Devon; the northern division of Durham, and the southern division of Durham; the northern division of Essex, and the southern division of Esssex; the western division of Kent, and the eastern division of Kent; the northern division of Lancaster; Lincolnshire, the parts of Lindsey; the western division of Norfolk; the eastern division of Somerset, and the western division of Somerset; the northern division of Stafford, and the southern division of Stafford; the eastern division of Surrey; the North Riding of York, the northern division of the West Riding of York, and the southern division of the West Riding of York. These among them dispose of the twenty-six seats, and it will be observed that we have not included in this list the county of Middlesex.

We have forborne to include it, because we think the county of Middlesex ought, for the purposes we have now in view, to be regarded rather with reference to the metropolitan representation, than to the representation of the

rest of the country. Now, in dealing with the representation of the metropolis, although we shall propose to make an increase of it to some extent, yet we do not propose to increase it on the same scale, as that on which we propose to increase the representation of more distant places; and upon this ground. It is obvious that the representation of the metropolis, owing to its proximity to the seat of Government, and to the closer relations of unity subsisting generally between its Members, is on the whole more efficient, and possesses greater weight in this House, than a similar numerical quota of representation from other portions of the country. We do not propose, therefore, to give to the metropolis the extraordinarily large number of Members, which it would be entitled to claim if it were dealt with in respect to its population alone.

Twenty-six seats, then, having been disposed of, we next propose to give a third Member to four boroughs having a population that exceeds two hundred thousand; namely, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and Leeds. That proposal raises our twenty-six to thirty. We then propose to give a second Member to Salford; which has but one at present, although it contains a population exceeding one hundred thousand. It is the only town in the whole country, which stands in that predicament. Thus we have disposed of thirty-one seats. We next propose to divide the borough of the Tower Hamlets, which has the largest population of any represented district in the country, exceeding even South Lancashire by about twenty thousand. The population of the Tower Hamlets, according to the last census, is six hundred and forty-seven thousand; and our plan is to separate it into two divisions, and to represent

each division by two Members. That proposal is tantamount to creating an additional Metropolitan borough, without altering the general standard of number for the representation of the Metropolitan boroughs. We also propose to take Chelsea and Kensington, which had in 1861 a population of one hundred and thirty-three thousand, out of the county of Middlesex, and to make them a borough returning two Members. It will be borne in mind that Chelsea and Kensington embrace a district of considerable extent, with a very rapidly growing population, so that their present population must be much beyond that which I have stated. We also propose to give one Member to each of six unrepresented municipal boroughs; having respectively either within the municipal or the intended Parliamentary boundary, a population of eighteen thousand persons, and upwards. This arrangement will dispose of six more seats. Those six boroughs are Burnley, Stalybridge, Gravesend, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, and Dewsbury. All of these, except Hartlepool, would preserve at present the existing municipal boundaries; and Hartlepool would, I believe, consist of the present municipal borough of Hartlepool together with the parish of Staunton. Thus far I have turned to account forty-one seats out of the forty-nine; and the forty-second we propose to give to the constituency of the University of London; a learned body, at present very numerous; and one constantly and rapidly increasing.

We have further, Sir, to consider the very important, and, indeed, irrefragable, claim of Scotland to an increase in the number of Members by whom it is represented in this House. Either the basis of population alone, or the basis of population combined with

property as decided by taxation, will prove that it is impossible to refuse, or to overlook, the claim of Scotland to an augmentation of representation. We do not, indeed, propose to give to Scotland the precise number of seats which Scotland might, perhaps, have been entitled to require, had we been engaged in a complete reconstruction of our parliamentary system; but a moderate demand on behalf of Scotland we are certainly not prepared to resist.

We have, however, had to consider the question whether that demand should be satisfied by a transfer of seats from England, or by an addition to the total number of the House. That question is, as far as I know, a matter purely of policy and of convenience; and we have concluded upon the whole, after some consideration, that this House would probably be disinclined to add to the number of its Members, under the belief, whether well or ill founded, that, if the proposal to increase were once assented to, it would be difficult to resist the continual intrusion, and continual concession, of new demands. We, therefore, Sir, propose, although with some reluctance, that England, out of its abundance, shall minister somewhat to the poverty of Scotland; and that the still remaining seven seats, which form the difference between the forty-two and the forty-nine that are supposed to be gained by our process of disfranchisement, shall be given to Scotland. The grounds of that disposal will, perhaps, be best stated in detail by my learned Friend the Lord Advocate; but I may mention briefly the places concerned. We propose to give an additional Member to each of the counties of Ayr, Lanark, and Aberdeen; a third Member to the City of Glasgow; a third

Member to the City of Edinburgh; a second Member to the town of Dundee; and one Member to the Scotch Universities. These eminent and learned bodies, as well as the University of London, are already possessed of a very large constituency, which, as I hope, will continue to increase from year to year.

That, I think, disposes of all I have to say with respect to the re-distribution of Seats; unless, indeed, I add a word on the subject of Ireland, which appears to us to stand entirely on its own separate ground. If we compare the present population of Ireland with the share which it possesses of the entire representation, it becomes quite clear that that island, with its hundred and five representatives, is hardly in a position to make any new claim, while, on the other hand, there is clearly no necessity to make any claim against it.

Neither do we think it necessary to make any proposition with respect to Wales. The general arrangement of the Welsh boroughs, and the working of that arrangement, are satisfactory, and the very few marked inequalities that subsist there have not appeared sufficient to warrant, or at least to require, any disturbance of the existing arrangements.

I now come to the question of boundaries; and, first of all, I will advert, not in terms of censure, but simply for the purpose of discussion, to the plan which was proposed in 1859. The question of boundaries is manifestly one capable of being extended to a vast importance. In point of fact, under the terms adopted in the Bill of 1859, it might have assumed the whole of that vast importance; for, in the fifty-seventh clause of that Bill, it was stated that, wherever the population

properly belonging to a Parliamentary borough extended beyond the Parliamentary limits thereof, the boundaries of that borough should be so enlarged as to comprise every part of the population "properly" (I think I use the language of the Bill) or "substantially" forming part of such borough. And it was further enacted, that the Inclosure Commissioners should appoint Assistant Commissioners, who should visit every borough in England and Wales for the purpose of examining the boundaries, and who should report to the Secretary of State wherever any enlargement of boundaries might be in their judgment necessary, in order to include within the area thereof the population "properly" belonging to such boroughs respectively.

Now, the difficulty which occurs to us, and which appears almost, if not wholly, insurmountable, is this: that a general enactment of that kind, creating an authority to visit every borough in England and Wales, would supply no adequate guide, by means of such words as I have cited, to enable any persons appointed for the purpose to perceive the design of Parliament, and to interpret the commission under which they were to act. Again, there is another point which cannot be excluded from consideration. In England we have a great many boroughs, Parliamentary boroughs, which have already been extended not only up to, but far beyond, their natural limits. It must never be forgotten, in considering the apparent disparity between the representation of boroughs and that of counties, with reference to their population, that, quite apart from the important circumstance that many small boroughs are in point of fact merely head-quarters of the rural

districts to which they belong, a large number of small boroughs are under a great, sometimes even a dominant, influence from purely agricultural and farming districts, which have at previous periods, and mainly at the great epoch of the Reform Act, been attached to them. If, then, we are to adopt this as a principle, that the limits of the Parliamentary borough are in all cases to be the limits of the town, and if, accordingly, we are to have a general re-consideration of the boundaries of boroughs on the principle of including everything that substantially belongs to them, how are we to reply to the argument that we ought to re-consider these boundaries with a view to abridgment, in all instances where by an artificial arrangement they now include, as they do in many, perhaps in scores of cases, rural districts of the kind I have described? Now, Sir, we are not willing to set in motion any such universal disturbance of the boundaries as they exist at this present time. For if we are to have, by our proposed legislation, a consideration of the question of the boundaries of towns, founded upon principles as broad as those which were included in the Bill of 1859, it seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that in equity a double process will be rendered necessary, a process of curtailing as well as of extending, while we think that upon such a process it is by no means desirable to enter.

But there is another great difficulty; how in the world would it be possible for any set of Commissioners to determine by their own wit what extent of area of population "properly" belongs, or "substantially" belongs, to these boroughs? If we look at the large towns of the country, we see them in a state of general

and somewhat rapid extension; but that extension is varied in its forms. There is one kind of extension which is locally continuous, and which includes all the various descriptions of building usually composing a town; the extension of buildings for purposes of business; along with that, an extension of shops; and also an extension of dwellings for the labouring population. But there is yet another movement of enlargement, entirely distinct from such an enlargement as I have last mentioned; and such I may presume roughly to call a residential extension, effected by or for the wealthier inhabitants of the borough, who, availing themselves of the facilities of locomotion now commonly afforded, seek to enjoy the advantages of something like a semi-rural residence, and who are loosely scattering the outskirts of many boroughs far and wide through their vicinities. But, it would be, I think, very difficult indeed, and, indeed, without much more precise direction absolutely impossible, for any body of Commissioners to undertake to deal with extensions of that class. Where the extension is closely and perfectly continuous I grant it might, perhaps, be done. Where, however, the extension is not thus continuous, I think, first of all, the task would be in itself immensely difficult; and in the second place I think it would probably be found to become impracticable, from the mixture of political motives and objects, which—though they might not bias the minds of the gentlemen Parliament might appoint for this purpose—would necessarily bias our minds, as the representatives of the counties and the towns, when we came to watch the re-adjustment of these boundaries, and to scrutinize the local re-distribution of power in each of the portions

of the country, with which the Commissioners would have to deal.

Therefore, Sir, we have sought for some other method of proceeding, less extensive, but, as we think, more natural and spontaneous, and unquestionably much more safe. I will state in detail the whole of what we now propose to the House. In the first place, we propose two enactments; one of a positive and limited character, and another of a more general but a prospective character. With regard to provisions of a positive character, although it is not possible to settle any such boundaries by means of a Bill of this nature, inasmuch as a consideration of them, if it were to be generally undertaken, would require too much time, together with information which we do not at present sufficiently possess, yet such of the points as we can satisfactorily settle and dispose of, we ask the House at once to dispose of by positive enactment. These cases of direct enactment would, however, only extend to a particular class of places. There are certain places, although we do not know that they are numerous, where the municipal boundaries appear to include certain districts not included in the Parliamentary bounds. Wherever that happens, that we think is a sufficient warrant for our assuming that the natural limits of the town include something that is not included within the Parliamentary boundary; and therefore we propose a general provision to the effect that wherever the municipal boundary includes any area that is not now within the Parliamentary boundary, the Parliamentary boundary is to be so far enlarged as to include that area. The other positive enactment is of a similar and obvious character. It is that the Commissioners of Inclosures shall consider

and arrange, subject to the approval of Parliament, both the boundaries of all the newly-enfranchised towns, and also the proper boundary to be fixed between the two proposed sections of the Tower Hamlets. In the mean time, provisional boundaries are named in the Bill; following, I think, in that respect, the precedent of the Reform Act.

Next I come to the prospective and more comprehensive question; and the conclusion at which we have arrived is this. In order to avoid all feuds and differences, from the mixture of considerations of practical convenience with considerations of political power, the best course we think will be, to adopt a rule for the future which will tend to sever and disentangle these conflicting motives. We propose that Parliamentary boundaries shall prospectively follow the local line; that is to say, the line, whatever it may be, which local considerations may cause, or recommend, to be adopted. In the growth of our towns, there is a progressive tendency to the enlargement of boundaries; and there is a law already, by which in certain cases it is provided for. The question of municipal extensions has lately been before the House. My right honourable Friend the Secretary for the Home Department, in answer to an inquiry in this House a few nights ago, stated his intention to introduce a measure for the purpose of facilitating and assisting that process; and the principle of the measure I will state to the House.

I ought first, however, to remind the House that at present our Parliamentary boroughs are under three descriptions of local governments. Most of them are municipal boroughs, with a regular municipality; some are boroughs which have been incorporated under the

Local Government Act; and others are boroughs which have been incorporated under some special local Act of their own, for the improvement of the particular town. I, however, draw no essential distinction between them. In all three classes of cases there is a local community, and there is a local authority. And where towns continuously extend themselves, it is commonly the interest of the inhabitants of the outlying portion, for the purposes of police, and for other purposes of self-government, to seek to be included in the municipal borough, or town community, however it may be defined. The principle of the Bill of my right honourable Friend (Sir George Grey) will be as follows. Wherever the inhabitants, forming the local community, shall address Her Majesty, or address the Secretary of State, proposing that certain districts shall be added to the town, and at the same time the inhabitants of those districts so to be added shall express their willingness to be joined to the town, there shall be a power vested in Her Majesty in Council to sanction the union, subject, however, to the approval of Parliament; and the provision which we shall introduce into this Bill is that, wherever any such enlargements shall take place, the Parliamentary borough shall follow the enlargement made for local purposes. In this way we think we shall avoid the mixture of political controversy with a question which is properly a local one. A local community, whatever it is, should be represented; and we think the best and safest definition of a local community will be obtained by giving facilities to the inhabitants for fixing its limits from time to time, as considerations relating to their own practical convenience may dictate and require. That, Sir, briefly described, is the plan which we propose to adopt with

reference to boundaries, and which will be found to be provided for in clauses contained in the Bill I now ask to lay on the table; a Bill which I hope will by to-morrow morning be in the hands of Members.

I next, and lastly, come to the question of procedure with reference to these Bills, on which I propose to say a very few words. I assume that leave will be given for the introduction of this Bill, and also of the two other Bills, leave for the introduction of which will be asked this evening by my honourable and learned Friend the Lord-Advocate, and by my right honourable Friend the Chief Secretary for Ireland, respectively. We shall then have, in fact, on the table of Parliament four Bills relating to the representation of the people; but the question of procedure, on which so much interest has been felt, is a question which mainly relates to the two measures that affect respectively the Franchise and the re-distribution of Seats. And what I have to say will be confined entirely to these two Bills. Now, looking back to the terms of the Amendment which we recently debated during a period so protracted, I find that those terms have been at this period literally complied with. The wish expressed in it was, that the whole scheme of the Government, which was interpreted by common consent to signify the measures dealing with the re-distribution of Seats and the boundaries of boroughs, together with the provisions relating to the Franchise, should be laid before Parliament at the time when it should be asked to proceed with the Franchise Bill. But although this was all which was asked by the Amendment itself, more, undoubtedly, was asked in the debate. And I cannot, perhaps, explain myself more correctly than by referring to the terms used by the noble Lord

the Member for King's Lynn. The noble Lord used the word "guarantee;" and he said something like this: that he wanted some guarantee, to make sure that the two subjects of the Franchise and the re-distribution of Seats should remain in the hands of one and the same Parliament. That is the end which the House appears to have in view, and I may add that it has been an end invariably in our contemplation. We have never felt the same degree of jealousy, or the same amount of apprehension of inconvenience with regard to the possible or casual separation of the two objects, even though that separation should in the extremest case chance to be attended with an intervening dissolution, which was expressed by the noble Lord and by others; but we have always thought and said that it was convenient, advantageous, and desirable that these two questions should be dealt with by the same Parliament.

The modes of attaining that end have been variously suggested. My right honourable Friend the Member for Gateshead suggested the addition of something in the nature of a suspending clause to the Franchise Bill; and my honourable Friend the Member for Wick suggested that these two Bills, the Franchise and the Seats Bills, should proceed *pari passu*, meaning, I presume, that the corresponding stages of each Bill should be taken in succession, one at a time. But then, if our minds are worked up to a certain high pitch of jealousy, even that arrangement does not meet the case, inasmuch as we cannot read two Bills a third time at one and the same moment. The Speaker must put the Question, on that as on every other stage, with regard to one of them before it is put for the other; and hence there is, at any rate, an abstract possibility of the separation of these two

measures, which it is desired to treat as in the nature of Siamese twins. Another proposal—I do not remember that it was made in the late debate, but it has been suggested at various times—is the incorporation of the two Bills into one and the same measure. That, no doubt, would perfectly secure the simultaneous treatment of the two subjects; and there is but one point of view in which we must continue to feel difficulty or hesitation as to such a combination. However, that point of view is under the actual circumstances one of much importance. When this measure was introduced, we did not feel ourselves in a condition to say to the House of Commons, "We now ask you to amend the representation of the people, and to make whatever sacrifices of time or personal convenience may be necessary for any extraordinary prolongation of the Session with a view to the complete treatment of the measure." But, at a subsequent stage of our discussion, I did state to the House that we had no objection whatever to go on contemporaneously or successively with these subjects, provided it were understood that they were not to be dropped on the score of mere want of time, but that we were to persevere, and to labour at the oar, until they should have been disposed of. That was the correct meaning of the statement, in which I adverted to the question of an autumn sitting. An autumn sitting does not necessarily mean an autumn Session; because, as the House is aware, there is another method of proceeding besides Prorogation, which has on rare occasions been adopted, and which might be adopted again, so as to prevent the dropping for the year of a weighty measure under consideration; namely, a lengthened adjournment of the House in July or August, until the month of September

or October, when the remainder of the work might be performed. [*Laughter and cries of* "Oh, oh!"] It is quite evident from the way that observation has been received that some honourable Gentlemen at least are not exceedingly anxious about the combination of the two Bills. What, however, I wish to do is to describe simply, frankly, and clearly to the House the position of the Government. What the Government object to is, the loss of the year. We are not willing to be parties to the loss of the year by the postponement of the subject. We may have been right or we may have been wrong, in thinking it wise to bring forward this subject in the present year. We believe that we were right. But I think it must be obvious that, having proposed it, we ought not to recede from it. Our intention is to persevere with what we have proposed. If it be the desire, the general desire, of the House to adopt any method—and other methods may be suggested besides those that I have named—of attaining the object which the noble Lord has in view—namely, a guarantee that these questions shall not be separated, we are perfectly ready to consider of and adopt that method, subject only to the condition that we shall go forward, and shall not throw over the subject, I do not say for consideration, it would be not even for recommencement, but for the chance of recommencement, in another year.

Looking to what had happened at the period of the Reform Act, and taking our measures of time from that period, I did state on a former night that we had come to the conclusion that it would be impossible to dispose in a satisfactory manner of the subject of re-distribution of Seats within the limits of the Session. But the House must be aware of the difficulties under which any com-

putation of that kind is formed. And without doubt, if there be a disposition to agree upon the re-distribution of Seats, there is no intrinsic difficulty in the matter, for there is nothing in the question itself of a nature absolutely to require, though there is much to admit of, prolonged discussion. [*Laughter.*] I do not know what excites the humour of my honourable Friends. I think that a true and a very plain statement. On the other hand, if there be a disposition to treat the re-distribution of Seats as matter of controversy and to stickle upon every topic as it arises, the points that may be urged, the varieties of arrangements that may be suggested, are so numerous, as possibly to create a very large demand indeed upon the time of Parliament. And it was in the expectation that there probably would be such a large demand upon the time of Parliament, that I said we had come to the conclusion, that we should not be able to dispose of the whole subject during the Session. But on that matter we place ourselves in the hands of the House. We shall be very glad, if it be the pleasure of the House, to proceed with greater dispatch than we were, or are, sanguine enough to anticipate; it would be in our opinion all the better for us, and all the better for the country. Now let us consider what is required by the objectors and by us respectively. The point urged on us is that the subjects should not be separated, but that one should securely and certainly follow in the train of the other. The point we have to urge is, that the year should not be lost. And therefore, if it be proposed to combine the subjects, whether by consolidation of the two Bills into one, or by any other method less stringent but still satisfactory to the House, we shall give a willing consideration to the proposal, if only it be understood

that we adhere to our original proposition, and that we have no intention to advise the prorogation of Parliament until the whole subject—meaning by the whole subject nothing less than the question of the Franchise and the question of the re-distribution of Seats—shall have been disposed of by the judgment of the House.

What I have said I think and hope will convey in a clear manner the general position which the Government desire it to be understood that they occupy. At the present moment I will add nothing specific with respect to any point of the procedure upon this Bill for the re-distribution of Seats. Our impression is, that Members of this House have been waiting until to-day to learn the character and substance of the Bill, and that, on being apprised of its character and substance, that they will naturally and reasonably proceed to form a final judgment as to the question of procedure. I have said our desire is not to quarrel with any portion of the House which is really agreed with us as to the end in view, about any question of mere procedure. If we have had debates involving matter of warmth and deep political interest, the whole of those debates I put out of view and memory, for the present purpose; and I assume that we are met now with a view to the prosecution of this Bill, and of the subject, with all the dispatch compatible with its due consideration. There is no element, as I hope the House will see, of reproach or controversy in the declaration that I now make. We are ready frankly to enter into such arrangements as will give the House the best security for retaining in its own hands the power of dealing with the whole subject; our only and I think legitimate desire being, that we may not lose the time and labour that have been already spent, and

that we may not be forced to trust the matter so long agitated, and now overripe for settlement, to chance, to the unopened future, to the accidents of another Session, or of the interval before it arrives. I have only to add that, in saying Her Majesty's Government would not wish to advise a prorogation until the whole matter has been disposed of, if it be the desire of the House to combine the two Bills into one, of course I must be understood as reserving, with respect to prorogation, all causes of public policy or exigency, arising *aliunde*, for any exercise of any Royal Prerogative. I mean that, in the absence of such causes, in the usual course of business, prorogation ought not, according to our view, to be advised, until this subject shall have been disposed of. In some manner or other, I cannot but entertain the hope that some method of proceeding with this question in a manner enabling us to arrive at a definite issue will be attained. I am sure it will be eminently satisfactory to the country that, having addressed ourselves to a settlement of a question of such vast importance, we should treat it with that earnestness of purpose, which on every account it demands at our hands.

Sir, I move for leave to introduce a Bill to make provision for the Re-distribution of Seats.

CAPTAIN HAYTER'S AMENDMENT.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: Mr. Speaker, the right honourable Gentleman the Member for the University of Dublin complained, I think, that there was no reality in this debate. Well, Sir, I know not if that be so; but if it be, I must say that it is not our fault. Every step we have taken, both since and before the period when our Franchise Bill was introduced to the House, has been a real step, and has been grounded upon the best consideration we could give to the actual circumstances of the case.

Now, let me briefly remind the House of what has taken place. In the first place it has been objected that we introduced a single, not a compound or complete, Bill; and in the second place it has been objected, that we did not introduce it till the 12th of March.

With respect to the question of the single Bill, I only notice it because the honourable and learned Member for Belfast (Sir Hugh Cairns), in his able speech on Friday night, inadvertently stated that the Government had admitted they were in error in their attempt to separate the two parts of the subject. Sir, the Government have never made any such admission, and have never entertained any such belief. I need not now say more, but so much it was requisite to say.

With regard to the introduction of the Bill on the 12th of March, I must own I have felt it somewhat

difficult to reconcile the two opinions expressed by the right honourable Baronet the Member for Droitwich (Sir John Pakington); who, with a curious eagerness, in the very same speech both found fault with us for not having postponed the measure altogether, with a view to more adequate consideration of the subject, until the year 1867, and then only a few minutes afterwards severely blamed us for not having introduced it, if we were to introduce it all, at the very commencement of the present Session. Now, if the right honourable Gentleman finds fault, as he did, with the measure as being immature—if he has complained of its hasty preparation when we had expended all the time till March in considering and preparing the measure, what would he have said of it if we had introduced it the first week in February? But, in point of fact, this question of the 12th of March has been made more of than it deserves. It was not in our power to have introduced the Bill, if we had been perfectly prepared with it, within the first few weeks of the Session. Have we forgotten the energetic and ardent appeals to us from the benches opposite to postpone Jamaica, to postpone every public question, to postpone Reform among the rest, until we had completed our legislation with reference to the Cattle plague? But I venture to say that, if the measure had been introduced on the earliest available day of the Session, it would have made little or no sensible difference in the position in which it now stands; because we were enabled, by its postponement till the 12th of March, to make such progress in the essential business of the year, connected with the annual supplies required for the service of the country, as would enable us—I say it without fear of contradiction—to devote a great por-

tion of the Session to the consideration of Reform; I believe we have not lost in reality so much as a week; and whatever may be urged on this subject, I do not feel that the circumstances of the introduction of the Bill on the 12th of March will in any degree justify us in receding from any position which we have taken up with respect to the progress of the question.

It has been said repeatedly in these debates, and it has been repeated in the discussion to-night, that we have pursued the evil course of listening to men of extreme opinions, and have not consulted either with the more moderate portion of our supporters, or with our opponents.

Now, Sir, in regard to consultation with opponents, every one should know that, on questions of political controversy, it may, as a general rule, be said to be practically impossible. Speaking of the matter by way of general rule, there would be no more dangerous practice. For what it would result in would be this; under the name and pretext of conciliation, it would end in a series of shabby attempts by Governments to devolve responsibility on those to whom it does not properly belong. But, Sir, did we not practically consult, that is, did we not in every way endeavour to anticipate and to meet, the wishes even of opponents? Did we not practically endeavour to conciliate them in the actual provisions of our measure? In framing a Reform Bill, was not the natural starting-point for this Government the measure of 1860? That Bill was introduced into the House with the express sanction of Lord Palmerston, whose Conservative tendencies are sometimes contrasted by speakers opposite with our dangerous leanings; and yet, did we not alter our Bill in respect to the counties

from a ten-pound franchise, which had the double sanction of Lord Palmerston and of the Government of Lord Derby, to a fourteen-pound Franchise; and in respect to the borough franchise, did we not alter the figure six pounds to the figure seven pounds, cutting off the very large section of persons whom the figure six pounds would have enfranchised? My noble Friend (Lord Grosvenor) and any one else are at perfect liberty, if they so choose, to say these great concessions are not sufficient to satisfy them. But, at least, I am entitled to refer to facts like these as indicating most unequivocally the anxiety of the Government to anticipate, as far as we could, the wishes and feelings that might be entertained in the various quarters of the House, and to make our mission with respect to Reform a reconciling mission.

Well, the course we took was to bring in a single measure on the subject of the Franchise. We had been warned, before the measure appeared, that in some quarters our plan was disapproved; and after it made its appearance, it seemed unsatisfactory to a considerable portion of the House. We have more recently been censured for giving way, and for not adhering to our original decision to introduce and prosecute steadily the subject of the Franchise without allowing, so far as depended upon us, the mixture of that subject with any other question. Undoubtedly we did make concessions; two very important concessions. The first of them was this. As we saw that suspicion was entertained with respect to our intentions, as it appeared to be believed that some plot on our part was connected with the measure to be introduced for the re-distribution of Seats, we were bound, however gross we might deem the in-

justice done us, to relieve ourselves from that suspicion, and to lay a Bill for the re-distribution of Seats on the table. We did it not willingly; yet we endeavoured not ungraciously to accede to the desire expressed. We did not do it willingly, because it was impossible not to foresee, as my honourable Friend the Member for Montrose has lately observed, that the difficulties of making progress with the first Bill would be increased, from the moment that the second Bill was produced. But we saw it was no more or less than a question between making progress on those terms of additional difficulty and discouragement, or, on the other hand, breaking at once with the majority of the House on the subject of Reform. I believe we took the more prudent course; but, at any rate, we took a conciliatory course, in departing from our original intention, while we manifestly exposed ourselves to the not unreasonable taunts of the right honourable Gentleman the leader of the Opposition in laying that Bill on the table. The immediate result, however, undoubtedly was, that we were enabled to surmount the difficulty and danger of the formidable Motion of the noble Lord (Grosvenor) behind me. So far, we had our reward. But then sprung up a new demand, that the two Bills should be united. Again, it was impossible for us to overlook the fact that, by the union of these two Bills, we should load the measure so as greatly to increase the difficulty of passing it. But what was the alternative? Once more the only alternative was, rupture with a considerable majority of this House. Again, therefore, we gave way to the prevalent feeling; we have been censured for doing so; but whatever else it indicates, at least the fact indicates our intention to conciliate. The reason why I refer thus

carefully and in detail to facts which I think prove this disposition to concede is, because I feel that much hangs upon the issue of this controversy; and that we all, whether we belong to the Government or the Opposition, shall have a strict account to render for the success or non-success of this new attempt to settle the question of our Parliamentary representation. (*A laugh.*) If there be, as there seems to be, some one single Gentleman in the House, who can indicate by his laughter a dissent from the proposition, it only proves more pointedly the serious nature of the juncture at which we have arrived, and the need that some at least even among the representatives of the people should open their eyes to perceive material facts, which they have not yet been enabled to discern.

I must allow that it was a discouraging circumstance when, the very moment after, with our assent, the two Bills had been united, a majority of this House determined to import into a measure already aiming at the settlement of the Franchise and for the re-distribution of Seats provisions relating to the enormously important, and not less critical and difficult, subject of corrupt practices at elections. This was done in spite of our remonstrance; in opposition to all precedent; in opposition, I must add, to all authority. One authority I will quote. It ought to have had weight with those who gave the vote that I now lament. It is that of a peer of great eminence—Lord Derby—who, speaking on the occasion of the discussion on Reform, under the Government of Lord Aberdeen, said—

"I trust that your Lordships will never consent to couple together as parts of one system, or belonging to the same system, two questions which are essentially

different from each other, however they may bear upon your electoral system—I mean measures for the purpose of preventing corruption and bribery at elections, and measures for the alteration of constituencies and the extension of the franchise."

The House knows the success that we met with, in the endeavour to give effect to Lord Derby's earnest appeal.

And then, in answer to these various, these perhaps crude but certainly well-intended efforts in the way of conciliation, we have had next to confront the Amendment of my honourable and gallant Friend (Captain Hayter), with respect to which the right honourable Gentleman (Mr. Whiteside) now complains that there is no reality in the debate. However, there appeared to be at the period when the motion was made considerable reality. There was my honourable and gallant Friend behind me; there was a well-compacted phalanx in our front; there were all the indications, nay, there were more than all the usual indications, of deliberate concert between those in front of us, and some few of the Gentlemen sitting in our rear. Because, when the honourable and gallant Gentleman ended his speech by moving an Amendment quite different from, and I think much worse than, the motion of which he had given notice, and when casually, with one or two of my colleagues near me, I took notice of the difference as you, Sir, were reading the Motion from the chair, the right honourable Gentleman (Mr. Disraeli) immediately, from an explanatory observation which he passed across the House, indicated that he was already privy to the variations of form, through which this Motion had passed. [Mr. Disraeli: No!] The right honourable Gentle-

man says it is not so. Then, by some divining faculty he attained, at any rate, to that knowledge, for he introduced some words in explanation of the difference between the two forms of the Motion. However, I need dwell no longer on the incident, for my honourable and gallant Friend, in I must say the most ingenuous and fairest manner, for which he is entitled to all respect, distinctly announced that it was an Amendment which he moved not only in concert with some gentlemen sitting on this side of the House, but in concert with others, whom he believed to represent the party opposite. That is the state of things at which we have arrived; and, therefore, if reality has been expelled from the debate, it has not been by any proceeding of ours. It is even a little hard upon men who have been sitting here in the nervous condition that generally befals those who believe they are arraigned upon a matter of life and death—it is a little hard, when one, probably numbered among the arch-designers against us, thinks fit to come and charge us with the want of reality in the debate, when, in point of fact, that want of reality only depends upon the breaking down, better known, however, perhaps to him than to us, of certain combinations, of which whatever else we may say or think, they appeared to be real and certain enough.

Now, with regard to the speech of my honourable and gallant Friend (Captain Hayter), and with respect to some other speeches that have proceeded from Members representing the boroughs grouped in the Bill for re-distribution of Seats, I make no complaint at all of those speeches. I make no complaint of my honourable and gallant Friend for his reference to the letter and the authority of Sir William Hayter. No one, that was

ever brought into relation with Sir William Hayter, can hear otherwise than with pleasure the mention of his name; and on this occasion in particular we do not at all shrink from recurrence to the authority of Sir William Hayter, because, if he now objects to the union between Wells and another town, and if the distinguished Baronet exercises his great paternal influence to induce the honourable and gallant Gentleman, who now represents that cathedral city, to object to our system of grouping, it need never be forgotten that there is another alternative. I should not have supposed, indeed, that it would have been more agreeable to my honourable and gallant Friend; but still I see that in everything he follows his father's footsteps; and, therefore, I do not fear to mention that Sir William Hayter was the attached, faithful, and able Secretary to the Treasury in the year 1854, when a Reform Bill was introduced, to which I for one was a party, by the Government to which Sir William Hayter belonged, and which contained a schedule that provided for, not indeed the grouping, but the disfranchisement of Wells. It is perfectly open, therefore, to my honourable and gallant Friend at once to satisfy all the instincts of filial affection, and likewise to perform his duty to his party and his country, if he thinks fit, by suggesting that other and sharper alternative.

However, Sir, speaking generally, I do not think we ought to criticise too severely the votes or expressions of those who may be called grouped Members; but on the contrary, we should consider whether, in any manner compatible with the demands of justice to the nation at large, we can either meet their views, or at any rate alleviate their embarrassments. Their position, rela-

tively to the towns they represent, on an occasion of this kind, is one which must be admitted on all sides to be one of grave and serious difficulty. It reminds me of a remarkable and almost historical passage in a great speech of Lord Brougham, delivered in defence of Queen Caroline. In that passage he says—

"An advocate, by the great duty which he owes his client, knows in the discharge of that office but one person in the world—that client and none other. To save that client by all expedient means, he must not regard the alarm, the suffering, the torment, the destruction which he may bring upon any other. In separating even the duties of a patriot from those of an advocate, and casting them off to the winds, he must go on, reckless of the consequences, if his fate should be to involve his country in confusion for his client's protection."

And so I find no fault with my honourable and gallant Friend if he was willing not only to displace the Government, which is a small matter, but even to arrest the course of this national question, and to plunge us once more into political confusion, for the sake of saving the representation of the ancient, independent, and venerable city of Wells.

Whether the plan of grouping which we propose is a wise one, I shall presently inquire; but I cannot but think that gentlemen, who are in the position of my honourable and gallant Friend, would do well to represent to themselves this one consideration: that the system of grouping adopted by the Government, even if it were chargeable with all the faults which have been so freely imputed to it, was at least not one adopted in a spirit of hostility to those small boroughs. It was

intended to mitigate the severity of a stroke, which the public good required they should receive, but which might not unnaturally seem harsh enough in many cases to their friends. And it would perhaps be well for those concerned to bear in mind, that the ejectment of that system of grouping from the provisions of the Government Bill might result in a less favourable, and not in a more favourable, mode of treatment for those boroughs.

I beg now, Sir, for one moment to notice a charge which has run all along the thread of the debate on the opposite side of the House—namely, the charge of precipitancy in the preparation of the Bill for the re-distribution of seats. Do not let it again be said, as it has been said from time to time, "Oh! it could not but be a crude and precipitate affair, because her Majesty's Government only took twelve days to prepare it." When the honourable and learned Member for Belfast mentioned something of the kind, I made a sign of dissent, and he thereupon very liberally enlarged the time to eighteen or twenty-four days, which is, at all events, better than twelve. But I am not satisfied with this concession. It was not a very short time, that was allowed for the preparation of the Bill. Unless I am very much mistaken, the official promise for the introduction of the Bill was given on the 23rd of March, and the Bill was introduced on the 7th of May; that was a term of at least forty-five days, or nearly four times the period which the honourable and learned Gentleman at first allowed us, and nearly twice the period of which the honourable and learned Gentleman, after all his obliging re-consideration, could give us the benefit. And here I must observe that in the Cabinet there were many

ministers, who had been concerned in previously constructing either two or three Bills which contained a system for the re-distribution of Seats; and really, Sir, upon the whole, if that Cabinet had not been able in forty-five days to prepare a Bill of this nature, depend on it the fault would have lain deeper than in the mere want of time. It is the truth that the Bill has been deliberately prepared, and deliberately laid on the table.

With regard to the general charge that anomalies are created by this Bill, I deny that it creates a single anomaly in the true and proper sense of the word. I ask of those who make the charge, Did the Reform Act create anomalies, or not, by disfranchisement and re-distribution of Seats? If you choose to say that the man who destroys a gross anomaly, and substitutes a much milder form of the very same thing, creates an anomaly, to that charge we are open; and to that charge the Reform Act was open. The Reform Act enfranchised Frome with one Member, while it left close by the city of Wells, having less than half of its population, with two Members. Did the Reform Act on that account create an anomaly? It is an abuse of terms to say so. The Reform Act mitigated anomalies, diminished their range, cut off the extremes and extravagances of those anomalies, and confined them within contracted limits; and though to some extent it of necessity reproduced them, it was only in a contracted and in a very far from natural sense, that it could be said that even a single anomaly was in these respects created by the Reform Act.

So much for matters bearing generally on the argument as to anomaly; and now let me refer to what has passed in the debate. Of course, it is necessary for

me to advert to the speech delivered by my right honourable Friend the Member for Calne: but as far as regards the general strain of his reasoning, I do not think there was anything in it to call for special notice from me. That is my opinion; for, as far as regards those parts which specially pointed to the Bill, I do not know of anything, except indeed the spirit of exaggeration with which it was delivered, which distinguished his arguments from the same arguments used by other honourable Gentlemen on the opposite benches. But I must protest against one portion of the speech of my right honourable Friend, and that is the portion in which he undertook to treat largely of the honour of the Government. He gave his view of the Government as composed of persons who needed not be particular, and who were not in a condition indeed to be fastidious, on such a subject; and he spoke, I think, with marked emphasis on the word, of "a truckle bed" in which they were to lie. I frankly state that, in my opinion, all that portion of his speech was one gross and continued error both of taste and judgment. Because, Sir, in these matters we must look, not only at the merits of the sermon, but at the individuality of the preacher; and I want to know what charge is to be made against the Government on this score which cannot be made, at the very least, as easily against my right honourable Friend? In that "truckle bed" there may be a bedfellow; and the right honourable Gentleman would learn with some surprise who that bedfellow might be. No doubt my right honourable Friend thinks he can defend himself; and so we think we can defend ourselves; but it is evidently just as well that there should be a truce between us on this particular part of the

question. If there is a charge against us on this subject, I do not object to its being urged; but let it be urged from the proper quarter. The right honourable Gentleman the Member for Droitwich, on the same evening, had charged us, in no unbecoming terms, with a long slumber on this question. Those who were connected with the Government of Lord Derby are entitled to challenge the conduct of the present Government with respect to Reform. But what is the charge? It is this, that while we are now acting on our convictions, we, for a long time, with a view to our own convenience, allowed our convictions to remain at rest. I would, then, ask my right honourable Friend the Member for Calne whether it is only to us that that charge applies, and whether it would not be better for him to avoid for the future the dangerous ground on which he has been bold enough to tread?

Again, Sir, I was astonished at the feat which my right honourable Friend performed in that speech. A Bill had been laid on the table for the re-distribution of Seats, which may be briefly and simply described as a Bill for cutting off, in round numbers, half a hundred seats from the small boroughs, and for distributing those seats among the great, and populous, and principally the growing communities of the country. My right honourable Friend, however, bitterly complained of what he called the provocation which had been offered him. This it seems consisted in our not having explained sufficiently the principle of this Bill. He declared that when it was produced he could not understand it; that he endeavoured to puzzle its principle out for himself, and that the week which elapsed between its introduction and the second reading was a great deal too short

a time to enable him to arrive at a knowledge of what it was that the Bill could really mean. (Mr. LOWE: To arrive at a knowledge of its principle.) I am obliged to my right honourable Friend for the assistance which he seems disposed to give me. He may, however, spare himself the trouble. The principle of the Bill lay, as I conceive, upon the very surface of what I have stated as the facts of the Bill. I submit to him that it did not require any further explanation of its principle beyond that which was furnished to the House when the Minister rose in his place, and said that the Government proposed to carry over forty-nine seats from small, or decaying, or secondary boroughs, and to distribute those seats among great towns and counties, and new communities. That single sentence fully explained, in my opinion, in what the principle of the measure consisted; and when I heard my right honourable Friend state that it took him a week to find out the meaning of that transference of seats, I confess it appeared to me that, in this latest freak of his fancy, he was endeavouring to emulate the performances of that portion of the party opposite—I do not think, I may observe in passing, that it is quite so large as has been supposed—which has been pungently described in the works of my honourable Friend the Member for Westminster, and to which allusion has very recently been made in debate.

Sir, speaking generally, I must observe that my right honourable Friend allows himself such licence in his method of handling the whole argument on Reform, that, although it is a very great treat to listen to his speeches regarded as intellectual exercitations, yet no man must imagine that, if his object be the attainment of a practical issue, it is of much avail to enter into a

discussion with such a disputant. What ground, for example, did my right honourable Friend take with respect to the small boroughs? He defended them, so to speak, through thick and thin, without the slightest qualification or reserve; and yet he, in the very same breath, spoke, and prepared himself to vote, in favour of the amendment, which pledges the House to the declaration that it is ready to consider the general subject of re-distribution of Seats, that is to say of a reduction of the representative privileges of small boroughs. At the same time I admit that my right honourable Friend is so far consistent with himself that he can produce an exact precedent from his own previous conduct. For, on a former night, he delivered a most able speech against all reduction whatever of the Franchise, and repeatedly informed us, in heated phrase, that its reduction would lead to the destruction of the Constitution; yet he, on the very same occasion, voted for a motion the terms of which gave expression to the declaration that the House was prepared to take into its consideration, and to settle, the subject of Parliamentary Reform, which inseparably, as I apprehend, involves the reduction of the Franchise.

But how, let me ask, can we occupy common ground with my right honourable Friend? How can we cherish the slightest hope of mitigating the differences which exist between us, or of arriving at a settlement with one who approaches a question of this gravity in such a spirit, and with such a degree of licence so far as regards his own individual opinion? On a former occasion the horror to which my right honourable Friend gave expression was a horror of democracy. He told us this House was to be vulgarized, that it was to be filled up with repre-

sentatives of the seven-pound householders, little superior in character and position to those by whom they were elected. But when he spoke in the present debate his tone had undergone a total change. He had wheeled right about to the other extremity of the argument. He entered upon another line of inquiry. He thought it necessary to state—and, in my opinion, greatly to overstate—the probable expenses of elections under the new system; and he proceeded to tell us the consequence of the Bill would be that the House of Commons would be filled with millionaires; that plutocracy, forsooth, constituted the evil which loomed darkly in the future. It is no wonder, then, that my right honourable Friend takes the liberty to contradict us when he assumes the liberty to contradict himself, and in the keenness of his movements does not seem to think it at all necessary to make the slighest efforts to reduce his speeches into harmony either with his votes, or with one another.

My right honourable Friend, I must say, in one respect confers upon us a very great advantage. I have listened to the speeches of the honourable and learned Member for Belfast, whom I have certainly been accustomed to look upon as one of the most able and certainly not of the least keen partizans in this House. I have heard him, and others who sit on the benches opposite, argue patiently and point by point the provisions of this Bill, and with a closeness to the facts of the case which was perfectly refreshing after the speeches of my right honourable Friend; because, although we may think they criticize unjustly our propositions, and represent them in colours sufficiently different from the truth, yet, at all events, we can discern so much of likeness in their

delineation of them that at least we know what they are meant for. But when we find my right honourable Friend disfiguring and denouncing in terms so inflamed, as it is his habit and pleasure on each occasion to employ, the whole of every proposition made by the Government, and every step they take, in whatever direction, and in whatever sense, it becomes hopeless indeed for us to deal with matters presented in such a form; while it is, on the other hand, positively refreshing, and gives us more kindly and philanthropic views of the disposition of honourable Gentlemen opposite, when we come down to the mitigated statements and language in which they clothe their opposition to this Bill, and appreciate their comparative moderation by the force of contrast.

I must now say, Sir, a few words upon the speech of the right honourable Member for Buckinghamshire, or at least upon the plan of re-distribution which he proposed; because I think it will be generally admitted that schemes for the re-distribution of Seats, involving almost an infinity of alternatives, and a vast number of questions upon which there may be most naturally, and even most legitimately, considerable difference of opinion, cannot well be judged of, perhaps, on the whole, except by being compared with other schemes. I shall endeavour, therefore, to look for a moment at the scheme of the right honourable Member for Buckinghamshire. The right honourable Gentleman repudiated a defence, which I had offered some years back for the principle of small boroughs, as an antiquated affair, and presented one of his own instead. Well, as to my defence of small boroughs, I believe at least there has been a time when it was true. I think that, at the epoch of the old Par-

liamentary system, what I said with regard at least to nomination boroughs was strictly true; that is to say, that they were made eminently useful, as a means of introducing to this House young men, who afterwards won the favour of large and popular constituencies And in the whole six hours, during which I have had the advantage of listening to my right honourable Friend the Member for Calne, there was this one single sentence or sentiment with which I had the satisfaction of concurring; the matter indeed was not agreeable, yet the concurrence between us in respect to it was very satisfactory to me, perhaps, because it was so rare; I refer now to his statement that, in his belief, the door of ingress to this House has been in some degree narrowed by the Reform Act. The enormous benefits conferred upon the country by that Act throw entirely into the shade any incidental disadvantages attending it like this; but I confess that, whether I may be right or wrong, I agree with him that to some extent such has been the case. But I do not think, as I have already owned, that the defence of the small boroughs drawn from the experience of a former time, applies to them as they now exist. The right honourable Gentleman the Member for Buckinghamshire, however, has formed a new line of battle in their defence. He contends that the small boroughs are necessary in order to maintain that diversity in the character and composition of this House, which, as he truly says, is so essential to its efficiency. Now, is it true that the small boroughs do contribute to that diversity? that is to say, do they contribute to it more than an equal number of seats of any other class? It is not enough to go to a particular small borough and show that it is represented by a very

good man, or by a person who has some special qualification. What is necessary is that, taking boroughs, say under ten thousand inhabitants, and going over the whole of the seats which they possess, we should be able to show that they return classes and descriptions of men to Parliament, who would find their way thither by no other channel. Now I say boldly and sweepingly, that this is not the fact.

The right honourable Gentleman, evidently after painful and laborious research, completely broke down in his attempt to show that it was the fact. He quoted in favour of small boroughs the case of my honourable Friend the Member for Frome; but Frome was enfranchised under the Reform Act. [Mr. DISRAELI: It is a small borough.] It is not a small borough in the sense in which we are dealing with small boroughs, for our Bill does not touch it; and no other Bill hitherto introduced into Parliament has touched it. The right honourable Gentleman went on to speak of Bridport, Huntingdon, and Peterborough as small boroughs. Undoubtedly those places are represented, as to one seat in each case, by distinguished mercantile gentlemen; but what did the right honourable Gentleman allege at the beginning of his speech? Why, that large constituencies will return only landowners, merchants, and manufacturers. Thus he admits that merchants find an abundant entrance to this House by means of the large towns; and it is true that no class of men, as a class, obtain a better access to the confidence of large constituencies, than merchants as well as manufacturers. Why then should small boroughs be maintained in order to provide for their convenience, which is amply provided for by other

means? These were the special instances as to the class of merchants given by the right honourable Gentleman.

But he said it was very important that gentlemen connected with the colonies should be represented in this House. And so it is. And what gentlemen here do represent the colonies? There is my honourable Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Marsh), whose support upon the main question we were not fortunate enough to obtain; but, I admit that he is an ornament of this House as a gentleman of colonial experience. He sits for the City of Salisbury, a town not included in the ordinary category of small boroughs, and not within the class of boroughs with which any Government has ever proposed to interfere. The other honourable Member for Salisbury (Mr. Hamilton), who has been more recently added to this House, acquired great distinction at his University, and is a gentleman well qualified to take a part, with honour to himself, in our proceedings; but he does not sit for one of the small boroughs, to the defence of which the whole point of the right honourable Gentleman's argument was directed. My honourable Friend the Secretary of the Treasury (Mr. Childers) sits for the borough of Pontefract; again a constituency of moderate size, but not a small borough in the sense of this Bill, or of any Bill ever introduced into Parliament by a Government which undertook to deal with the subject of small boroughs for the purpose of restricting their representation. Lastly, my right honourable Friend, the Member for Calne, undoubtedly sits for a small borough at this moment, but he did not find his way into this House as a representative for a small borough;

he in the first instance had successfully addressed himself to an open constituency. He represented a town of more considerable size; and having succeeded in obtaining the confidence of that constituency, as a means of entrance to this House, he distinguished himself herein such a manner as opened to him the road to the representation of Calne. So much for members connected with the Colonies.

But then the right honourable Gentleman likewise mentioned Members connected with India. And was it not a little extraordinary that, in order to buttress his argument, and to find an instance connected with India, which was suitable to his point, he went back to the case of Sir James Hogg, who sat for Honiton several Sessions if not several Parliaments ago—not less, I think, than seven years ago? But, I ask, who are the men connected with India now sitting in this House, and what are the small boroughs that return them? We are dealing with a most important allegation; for, while the right honourable Gentleman repudiates, not improperly, my superannuated defence for small boroughs, he sets up, forsooth, a bran new defence of his own. Who, then, are at this moment the chief representatives of Indian affairs, and Indian knowledge, in this House? My noble and gallant Friend who sits for Taunton (Lord William Hay), which is not in the sense of this Bill a small borough; the Friend of the right honourable Gentleman who sits for Dumbartonshire (Mr. Smollett), which is a county constituency; and again, my honourable and gallant Friend who generally sits on the third bench behind me (Colonel Sykes), is Member for the large city of Aberdeen. I take the instances that come first

to my mind. But I ought not to conclude without referring to my honourable Friend the Member for the city of London (Mr. Crawford), who, representing the vast metropolitan constituency, completes the list of those who may be quoted as representing Indian interests and special Indian knowledge in this House. Now, Sir, it will not do for the right honourable Gentleman to say that Salisbury, Pontefract, and Kidderminster are towns of moderate size. No one proposes to attack towns of moderate size. He objects to this Bill because it deals largely with small boroughs. He upholds small boroughs, and I must say that his defence, depending, as he himself made it depend, upon particular instances, has entirely and absolutely failed.

Now, as I understand the right honourable Gentleman, he has himself a plan of disfranchisement. He says that the grouping of represented boroughs is a scheme totally unknown to England, and that the grouping of unrepresented boroughs is a method unknown to Scotland. As regards the first of those propositions, it is nearly true, but even this is not true altogether; for there are two or three sets of boroughs grouped in England—namely, the Cinque Ports, the Hythe boroughs, and the Monmouth boroughs; not to mention Penryn with Falmouth. With regard to Scotland, the Scotch boroughs were not, as was erroneously stated by the right honourable Gentleman, grouped together by the Reform Act, as unrepresented towns which were then to receive for the first time the privilege of representation. They were grouped as representative boroughs at the period of the Union, nearly in the manner in which they now stand; and all the arguments derivable from precedent may be

drawn from those Scotch boroughs. But while the right honourable Gentleman objects to grouping done in our fashion, what does he put in its place? He gave us a rough outline of his own plan. As I understand him, he would proceed as follows. He would take the smallest possible number of Members from the smallest boroughs, probably in the mode of his Bill of 1859; he did not mention a number, but say some fifteen or twenty Members. Having thus got his little store together, he would give them to new towns, and would form these new towns in such a way as, to judge by the instances he gave us, would pay off the population of this country at the rate of seventy thousand, eighty thousand, and ninety thousand of population for each Member that he withdraws from the small boroughs. For he told us what sort of groups ought to be taken. He enumerated five or six large towns—Ratley, Dewsbury, Mirfield, Cleckheaton—six, or, I believe, seven in all, with a population of ninety-one thousand; while the other groups he gave us had a population, I think, of sixty-five thousand and seventy-two thousand respectively. If that is the idea of the right honourable Gentleman, I can well understand that by getting twelve or fifteen Members from the smallest boroughs, he would in that way dispose very cheaply of the claims of a population of one million, or one million five hundred thousand, inhabiting the new rising towns that are scattered through the country. Next, he would have an extension of the boundaries of towns. He says we ought to take out of the counties all those who do not follow the leading pursuit of the counties—that is, the pursuit of agriculture. Of course, I do not mean that he would

proscribe and exclude from the political area of the county, pursuits merely subsidiary to agricultural pursuits; but where a manufacturing hamlet is formed, or where mining enterprise is developed, or where a port is constructed; all these places, according to his doctrine, ought to be weeded and purged out of the counties. Besides this, the boundaries of towns, he says, ought to be so extended as to comprise all the inhabitants dwelling in the neighbourhood, who follow their ordinary avocations within those towns. By the double operation of taking some fifteen or possibly even twenty Members from the small towns for new enfranchisements, and the enlargement of boundaries in this extended sense, he might effect his avowed object of withdrawing from the counties a population of something like two million souls, and might thus clearly obtain the double end of leaving the minor boroughs of the country in possession of nearly the whole of their present Parliamentary force, subject only to that small reduction; while at the same time he would reduce the counties to little more than a simple collection of landlords and tenants, together with those inhabitants of purely rural villages and towns, who are immediately dependent on them. If that be the plan of the right honourable Gentleman, or anything approaching to it, I can perfectly well understand his feeling of suspicion as to what might be the nature of our scheme for re-distribution. Because our plan of re-distribution has been based upon the repudiation of all indirect and secondary aims; upon the principle of simply restraining the representation of small boroughs and enfranchising large communities, without any design thus to disturb and recast, as he

would disturb and recast them, the distribution of population and of power.

The object of a scheme of re-distribution ought to be, and the test of its excellence must be, the degree in which it leaves any given extension of the Franchise as nearly as possible unchecked to its full, legitimate, and natural operation. If it is asserted, in opposition to our plan, that re-distribution of Seats is a thing to be mixed up, as it were on principle, with a complicated scheme for drawing broad lines of separation between counties and boroughs, that are totally unknown to the tenor of our history, and totally opposed to the spirit of our Constitution, then I must say that, not only am I here prepared to defend our scheme of re-distribution in comparison with that of the right honourable Member for Bucks, but to predict with confidence that no such scheme of re-distribution, as his, will or can ever receive the final sanction of this House.

I must here, Sir, point out for the consideration of honourable Gentlemen opposite that which really seems to be as yet unperceived by them. They appear to treat the ancient parts of the Constitution as anomalies and solecisms, whenever those parts of it come awkwardly across their own views. They say that the vote of the freeholder, living within the limits of a borough, for the county in which that borough is situate, is an anomaly. It may be an anomaly according to their rather new-fangled views; but it is not an anomaly in itself. Is it not one of the most ancient parts of the Constitution? Was not the county representation the representation of property? And was not the borough representation the representation of the people? And is it not a fact that, before the

Reform Bill passed, the freeholder's voting powers in the two capacities of inhabitant and proprietor were so distinctly recognised, that the same man actually had his vote for the borough by virtue of the very same freehold which qualified him as a county voter? Can there be a more distinct assertion of the intention and sense of the ancient Constitution, and of the line between the two descriptions of representation? The line was not by the Constitution drawn, as the right honourable Gentleman would draw it, between agricultural pursuits on the one side, and manufacturing and commercial pursuits on the other; but between the representation of the population through the towns, and the representation of property through the knights of the shire, whether that property lay in the town, or whether it lay in the county. I will not detain the House upon the subject of the leaseholding clause of this Bill, because, considering the statistics produced by my right honourable Friend the Member for North Staffordshire with reference to Birmingham, we have come to the conclusion that the leaseholding clause demands further consideration, before the House of Commons is asked to make any provision with reference to that part of the subject. It will therefore not be pressed. This, however, I may say, that the spirit of this clause, aiming at the extension of the proprietary part of the county constituencies, is, especially at a time when we are seeking to extend largely the occupation franchise, thoroughly legitimate and entirely constitutional, as a supplement to that provision of the Reform Act which created the copyhold and leasehold franchises in counties.

But I now come to consider the particular charges

which have been made against our Bill. And I am here in a position of some difficulty, because the Amendment which has been moved, and the debate upon that Amendment, are to a certain extent in conflict. But in the first place I contend that the grounds of opposition to our Bill for the re-distribution of Seats are not good; in the second place, that, even if they were good grounds, they are totally insufficient to justify a vote against going into Committee upon the Bill. And, thirdly, I must point out that the Motion, not such as it stood in the first instance, but such as it stands in the form in which it has been placed in your hands, Sir, is a Motion against the terms and form of which I think we have a right to protest. Save and except certain wholesale denunciations of all Reform, like those of my right honourable Friend behind me (Mr. Lowe), there has been no sound, I might almost say no serious objection taken to the rest of the Bill, no objection covering the real breadth of the case, either by the honourable Member for Wells, who so ably defended his constituency, or by any of those who succeeded him. But if you confess the question to be great, if you allow that it has been again and again recommended to you from the Throne, then, even if we admit all the objections raised, I contend that their scope is limited, and that you are still bound to go into Committee on the Bill. It has been objected, for example, that eight thousand is not a right limit of population for partial disfranchisement; and we have been urged and recommended to carry it higher. It has been objected generally, that our groupings have been ill-advised and unfair; and it has been pointed out in detail, that some few of our arrangements in that respect may be improved upon.

It has also been a source of objection, that there has been no provision made in the Bill for the representation of minorities; and it was stated that the unicorn representation of counties ought not to be extended, but that it would be much better to re-divide those counties, which have already two divisions, into three divisions, giving two Members to each of the three. It has further been made a subject of complaint, that Members should be taken from England to be given to Scotland. It has been objected, in the very careful argument of the honourable and learned Member for Belfast (Sir Hugh Cairns), that the plan for the re-adjustment of boundaries is unsatisfactory. I freely admit that this is one of the most difficult parts of the whole subject, and I think the honourable and learned Gentleman will admit also that it is a difficult part of the subject, upon the settlement of which the most temperate, as well as the most detailed, argument in Committee would be required. It has been objected, again, that we do not enfranchise a sufficient number of new towns. And as far as I can gather the sense of my Colleagues—while certainly it is the impression on my own mind—that is, without doubt, one of the points of detail in our plan which is most open to criticism. Here are no less than seven or eight points, all of them of very considerable importance I admit, but every one of them questions fairly open to dispassionate discussion, without any prejudice to the general scope and purport of our measure. But these six or seven points might be multiplied to sixty or seventy; because, from the nature of the question of re-distribution of Seats, the points it opens to discussion, and moreover to what must be taken to be *bonâ fide* discussion, are almost infinite in

number. Undoubtedly the several questions I have named are questions which, when we go into Committee, it will be our duty to hold ourselves ready in an open and conciliatory spirit to examine, and which we must endeavour to settle, not upon the basis of any foregone conclusions of our own, but with a view to general equity and general satisfaction. But they are, every one of them, questions which admit of accommodation, and which are to be broadly distinguished from the main points of the plan.

But, Sir, having stated this, I must now say one word to show how little considered, as I think, have been the objections which have been taken to our grouping in general. The great complaint has been the complaint of distance. And, another head of objection has been a want of identity of interest among the towns grouped together. Now, it is admitted that the grouping system works well in Wales and in Scotland. But there is no identity of interest whatever among the boroughs grouped together, under the present law, either in Wales or in Scotland. Again, what identity of interest is there in an ordinary county? Did those who are now present in the House hear the speech of my honourable Friend who now sits for Newport, and who once represented West Kent? He described the various interests in the neighbourhood of London, those of the seaport towns lower down on the Thames, and of the hop district; then the suburban villas which abound in that portion of Kent, together with the agricultural community; and I may well ask, as he did without receiving a reply, what identity of interest is there in these? Now with regard to the objection touching distances. It has been stated that some of the boroughs

proposed to be grouped are thirty miles apart. This is the case in perhaps one or two instances, and in these only. But what is the state of the case in Wales? In Wales there are some seven or eight cases of boroughs thirty, and even above thirty, miles distant from one another. How is it, then, in Scotland? I have before me four of the groups belonging to that country. The average distance of the Ayr boroughs from each other is forty-seven and a half miles, and the maximum distance is seventy-four. The Dumfries boroughs average twenty-five and a half miles in distance, while the maximum is thirty-eight. The average distance of the Elgin boroughs is thirty-one, the maximum being fifty-eight. In the Wick boroughs the average distance is forty-nine, and the maximum is no less than one hundred and eight miles. Now, really it is somewhat fastidious to produce some particular instance where a couple of boroughs are some twenty-six or even thirty miles apart, an instance of a kind most rarely found in our scheme, and to treat any such cases, not as matters for consideration, which they may justly be, with a view to more satisfactory arrangements in detail if you can make them, but with those sweeping denunciations which, it was said, by some laudatory critic with respect to the speeches on his own side, had demolished, forsooth, the system of grouping proposed in the Bill.

There is one method proposed by the honourable and gallant Member for Wells, against the adoption of which, as a general rule, I must, on the part of the Government, state the strongest objections; that is, the plan of taking in, as a general rule, in order to make up and supplement the small boroughs, the still smaller places in the neighbourhood. It is remarked that we have got

in the neighbourhood of some of these places certain towns of four thousand, or five thousand, or six thousand inhabitants, and that, if we will add these to the towns now represented, we shall have a population of seventeen or twenty thousand; and that the principle of our dealings with small boroughs ought to be first to take in those minor places, which are in their immediate neighbourhood. Now, this appears to me to be an extravagant proposition. There is in this country an enormous regard for vested interests; but there is surely some limit of reason applicable even to that regard. You may fairly say, when we are dealing with those boroughs which have long enjoyed Parliamentary representation, "Deal tenderly with them if you think it fit to touch them, but do not extinguish them. Give them some modified share of that privilege which they have so long possessed, in cases where it has not been grossly abused." But it is really going a little too far to contend that these old privileges, which are in the nature of a monopoly, and which are in tendency somewhat adverse to the community at large, because they curtail the representation given elsewhere to larger and more important communities, shall be held to contain in them such an essence of diffusive virtue, that it shall spread around them on all sides, and shall, as it were, consecrate the hamlets, the villages, or the little country towns that may be so fortunate as to be in their neighbourhood, for the purpose of introducing them also to the privilege of being represented in Parliament, in a manner quite out of proportion to their claims, while wholly unsustained by their state and condition heretofore. At the close of the civil wars of Augustus, when he settled his soldiers on parcels of land in the territory of Cremona, well known as the unfortu-

nate Cremona, the supply of space there was not found sufficient for the purpose, and they had to appropriate some portion of the territory of Mantua to make up the deficiency. The poet, speaking of the circumstance, says, in a line often quoted—

"Mantua, væ miseræ nimiùm vicina Cremonæ!"

But it is little less than a ludicrous inversion of that sentiment, to pick up some little village or market town in the neighbourhood of Honiton or Wells, and to provide that that circumstance of neighbourhood shall be a reason for conferring on such a place a power of returning a Member to Parliament, which by the general rules of right and policy should be given to some large constituency. Whether there may or not be instances in which, upon particular local grounds, a departure from the general rule may be justified, I will pass no opinion. This is one of the points that can be best settled after a general and fair comparison of views mutually entertained in Committee; but, as a general rule, I am sure that it would be unwise, nay quite impossible, to induce Parliament to accede to a system which should patch up a constituency, or eke out a limit of population, on behalf of these small towns, by bringing in other small and insignificant places as their companions, for the purpose of fastening Parliamentary representation down to those precise spots on the surface of the country where it has been fixed by former legislation, adopted under circumstances the very reverse, as is well known, of those which now prevail.

I am bound then, Sir, to state frankly and at once, that there are some kinds of grouping to which we could not accede. We could not accede to the wholesale

grouping of new places proposed by the right honourable Gentleman the Member for Bucks; nor yet to the artificial grouping of small towns here represented, and some of them hardly more than villages, with other small villages and towns that do not now possess the Franchise. We know that Shakespeare says—

> "The strawberry grows underneath the nettle;
> And wholesome berries thrive and ripen best
> Neighbour'd by fruit of baser quality."

But we do not believe in such a virtue of mere vicinage, as among constituencies of this description.

But perhaps the House will be surprised if I go on to say not merely that we are open to consider, and that it is our duty to consider, the propriety and sagacity with which each of our actual groups is framed, but that no declaration has ever been made by Government to the effect that grouping itself is a vital principle of the Bill. We have recommended it on grounds which we thought, and which we continue to think, amply sufficient. We think, as we thought, that it is adverse to bribery. We have not deemed it to be likely to increase expenditure. And I apprehend that, if honourable Gentlemen will investigate actual cases of expenditure in grouped boroughs at contested elections, they will see some ground for that opinion. We have likewise believed that it would favour the return of an eligible class of Members to this House; and that in another view it might perhaps have this immediate advantage—that if it should become absolutely necessary to require the present Parliament to continue to sit for a time, greater or less, after the Re-distribution of Seats Bill shall have been passed, there would undoubtedly be a more glaring

inconsistency in retaining in this House the representatives of constituencies that were absolutely disfranchised, than those of constituencies about to be conjoined in groups. But, however that may be, not a word has at any time been spoken by us, to the effect that we regarded grouping, much though we approve of it, as one of the vital or essential principles of the Bill.

Perhaps it may be well, Sir, that I should just remind the House what have been stated to be those leading principles.

The leading principles of the Bill in its two parts have, I think, been stated before with sufficient clearness to the House; but it will only require a few moments to repeat them. The leading principles of the Franchise Clauses are to complete, in the first place, those provisions of the law which enfranchise voters at ten pounds clear annual value and upwards; to extend the borough franchise downwards; and to extend the county franchise downwards. These are the principles of the Bill as far as regards the part relating to simple enfranchisement. As regards the Re-distribution of Seats, its principles are to curtail the small borough representation, not to extinguish it; indeed to leave, I think, a very large, at the least a very fair, proportion of it; to curtail the small borough representation by the removal, in whatever manner may be thought best, of some fifty Members, more or less—it is not necessary to adhere rigidly to any one particular figure—and to distribute the seats among the great and growing and new communities; and, lastly, to secure to Scotland, from whatever source, that increase of her representation to which we contend that her wealth and her numbers justly entitle her. Now, these I believe to be the principles

of the Bill. And that claim of Scotland is in my belief so strong and clear, upon an investigation of the case, as to convince me that, unless the matter becomes envenomed by party discussion through some error of ourselves or others, it is impossible to do otherwise than to admit it. Whence those seats for the benefit of Scotland are to be obtained, is another matter; but in regard to the claim itself I cannot see any reason why Scotland, with one-sixth of the population of the United Kingdom, speaking in round numbers, should be contented, or should be expected to be contented, with little more than one-tenth of the representation.

Now, I think, from the manifestations I have recently observed, that some honourable Gentlemen on the opposite side appear to suppose that there is something questionable or inconsistent, on the part of the Government, in thus appearing to throw open to discussion a great number of points connected with the re-distribution of Seats. I cannot, however, conceive what just accusation can be brought against the Government on that score. It was one of the difficulties, and to my mind the greatest of all the difficulties and objections attending the combination of the two subjects, that in dealing with the question of re-distribution we could not but open so many views, and touch such a multitude of local and class interests, each of which would, according to our usual modes of action, require that its particular claims should be fully and patiently considered. It was not, therefore, the principle of the re-distribution of Seats that was attended with so much embarrassment; it was the mass of detail which attends any such measure of Reform, and this, I confess, has always appeared to me to be a strong practical argument in favour of the separation of

the two subjects. However, I am not arguing now with a view to reopen a question which has been referred by us to the decision of this House. We have placed ourselves frankly in the hands of the House; and we shall abide by its decision on this point, in our treatment of the matter. I am only desirous of showing that a very large part of the subject of re-distribution necessarily consists of matters which should be held open for discussion, and which ought not to be settled according to any foregone conclusion. To me it has, I confess, always appeared that the most important branch of the subject is the enfranchisement of our fellow-countrymen. That being so, I do not see how we have fairly laid ourselves open to the charge of inconsistency by our readiness to concede in the plan of re-distribution, for in the direction of the Franchise it is that, as we feel, lies our most solemn and serious responsibility. Sir, these are the principles of the Bill which we submit, and what we ask from the House is its fair consideration.

I am bound to say that I do not think the Amendment now before us is compatible with any such fair consideration of the Bill. The Amendment is perfectly definite so far as regards the object of my honourable and gallant Friend; that is, it condemns, in a form abundantly explicit, the system of grouping proposed by the Government. That is a perfectly fair issue to raise; and while my honourable Friend raises that issue, we say in reply, that we might admit his proposition, though we do not in any degree admit it, and yet it might be his duty to go into Committee on the Bill. But the Amendment goes on to state that "the scheme is not sufficiently matured to form the basis of a satisfactory measure." Now, it is, even grammatically, of the utmost possible

difficulty to decide what may be the meaning of the word "scheme" in this motion: the word "Franchise," and all references to the subject of the Franchise, having been by some careful expurgator, no doubt for good reasons, struck out of the Amendment. The Amendment, therefore, is little better than unintelligible. It looks like an Amendment which has been framed with the view of at once getting rid of the measure, and yet escaping the responsibility of having rejected the Bill or any of the provisions which it contains, and the risk of being called to account by constituents. Notwithstanding the frequency of the "No, noes," which arise from time to time on the other side, I, however, at this moment am free to confess that I should be glad to be saluted by a very storm of those "No, noes," when I proceed to state my fear, that such was the object of the party opposite in supporting this Amendment of my honourable Friend. The honourable and learned Member for Belfast (Sir Hugh Cairns) spoke in terms of high approbation of the Amendment; the honourable Mover avowed his concert with the party opposite; and if I understand rightly the statements which have appeared in the usual channels of Parliamentary information, all the strength of that party is to be used in support of it. But I protest in the name of the Government, I protest on behalf of the character of Parliament, I protest on the part of my countrymen at large, against dealing with measures of great importance in this House—especially measures of such capital importance as this—not in the good old English manner of "Ayes" and "Noes," but in language which nobody can construe, and which nobody can understand. Here is a declaration that the scheme of Her Majesty's Government "is not sufficiently matured to form the basis of a

satisfactory measure." Why, Sir, do not honourable Gentlemen see that any man, who wanted to resort to mere cavil or mere trick, for the purpose of escaping from the real brunt of a controversy, would adopt that very language? Is it not to those generalities that, among conflicting States, the lust of ambition resorts for the prosecution of its wicked purposes? Do not let any Member suppose I am speaking of the movements of political parties. I am speaking rather of those movements of which history, unfortunately, is too full—frightful and bloody collisions, produced between contending nations, by that lust of ambition which I am describing, and which scruples not to employ these generalities, because their effect is to efface the distinctive lines between justice and injustice, between truth and falsehood; to prevent the merits of any question from being brought to a fair issue, and to provide a place of refuge on behalf of those, who are afraid of the exposure they would suffer if the cause were left to reason and to argument. Such modes of speech, again, have been too often resorted to in theological controversies, when objections of a definite character, which could be embodied in judicial forms, have been avoided, and vague phrases about "dangerous doctrines," or "savouring of heresy," or something of the kind, have been made use of, showing, in fact, nothing but the cruelty, the injustice, or the cowardice, of those by whom they were invented and applied.

I was in hopes, Sir, that when I ascribed this evasive character, this indirectness of aim, to the Amendment, I should be met by a tempest of articulate disclaimers, and that there would be some sympathy with the view we take of the manner in which warfare such as this

should be conducted. Well, I was in hopes; but my hopes are to be disappointed. In the course of a public life, now somewhat long, I, like other men, have been disappointed in many things, and I probably may be again. But we had, as we think, a right to expect some more open and direct mode of proceeding; indeed we had a special right to expect it. It was promised us; it was gratuitously promised us; it was even ostentatiously promised us. On the 6th of February, 1866, Lord Derby used these words:—"I promise the noble Earl another thing"—he had not been asked for any pledge at all, but he promised, and promised largely—"I promise the noble Earl another thing, that this Bill shall have fair play—that it shall not be thrust aside by any underhand manœuvre—that there shall be no factious movement or combinations against it on the part of those who can combine for nothing else, but that it shall be dealt with on its own merits."

Is it dealing with a measure on its merits to say merely that it is not sufficiently matured? When, in the long course of Parliamentary controversy, was that course adopted? What instance, what precedent, is there of a great party resorting to that mode of warfare? (*Cries of* "Fifty-nine" *from the Opposition.*) In '59? Is '59 your instance? In 1859 the Bill was condemned upon grounds perfectly definite and clear; it was condemned because it did not reduce the borough franchise. Act as my noble Friend acted in 1859, and my complaint falls to the ground. Condemn the Bill, if you can muster courage for the purpose, because it does reduce the borough franchise. In your speeches you have said you objected to its reduction. My right honourable Friend the member for Calne, my honourable Friend

the Member for North Devon, and the right honourable Gentleman the Member for Buckinghamshire, objected in their speeches to a reduction of the borough franchise. Let the right honourable Gentleman, let some one among you, embody that opinion in a motion. Or, if he do not venture to embody his opinions in a motion —and I admit that he is not bound to do that unless he pleases—let him take the usual, the known, and the established course of opposing our measure by a negative; and the country will then know what he means. It is useless to fall back upon these large, loose, vague, unmeaning words. You cannot build upon such words the name and fame of a party. You may embarrass the Government; you may impede the course of a great measure; you may injure for a moment, and for a moment only, those who are politically opposed to you; but you cannot lay any solid foundation, by such courses as these, for the fortunes of yourselves and of your friends. Do not let us be drawn into these idle, limitless, and almost wild denunciations about the Constitution. Every time my right honourable Friend (Mr. Lowe) addresses the House he gives part of his harangue to woful prophecies about the Constitution. In his first speech, drawing upon the works and words of Canning, from what cause I know not, but I am quite sure it was not from the poverty of his own imagination, he prophesied the destruction of the Constitution; and every speech that has come from him since, though he has no longer foraged among the pastures afforded by the speeches of that statesman, predicts in a new form, but with darker and yet darker features, the ruin and the downfall of the Constitution. "Do not," he says, "I pray you, discard rules and maxims that have never failed, for doctrines

and theories that have never succeeded." What is the rule and the maxim that has never failed? The ten-pound franchise. What is the doctrine and the theory that has never succeeded? The seven-pound franchise. The seven-pound franchise has not succeeded; no doubt: for it has not yet been tried. The ten-pound franchise, before it was tried, was a doctrine and a theory that had never succeeded; and it was met with the very same reproaches, and loaded with the very same denunciations, delivered with not less earnestness and ability than those delivered by my right honourable Friend. My noble Friend the Member for Leicestershire, in his speech delivered to-night, tempts me to ground upon which, if I had not heard the words of Tennyson from his mouth I should not have ventured to tread. My noble Friend described England as—

> "A land of old and wide renown,
> Where freedom broadens slowly down,
> From precedent to precedent."

Lines taken* from the noble dedication and address, I believe, of the Poet Laureate to the Queen. My noble Friend stopped with those lines. Perhaps it did not suit his purpose to go on; but Mr. Tennyson proceeds, and, in his description, he adds these lines, not a whit less worthy of his fame:—

> "And statesmen at her council met,
> Who knew the seasons, when to take
> Occasion by the hand, and make
> The bounds of Freedom wider yet,

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* This is an error. The lines quoted by Lord John Manners are from an earlier work of the Poet, entitled 'Britain.'

By shaping some august decree,
Which kept her throne unshaken still,
Broad-based upon her people's will,
And compassed by the inviolate sea."

We, who support this Bill, claim to love the Constitution, we claim to value the Constitution, we claim to revere the Constitution, as sincerely and as earnestly as any of those opposed to us. My right honourable Friend, the Member for Calne, looks back with something like contempt on those, who opposed the Reform Bill of 1831. We have heard him denounce in terms of the extremest severity the Parliamentary system which prevailed before that great measure, but he thinks that along with that contempt for the course, that was then pursued by men of the stamp of the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel, he may join the kind of opposition which he now offers to the milder measure of Her Majesty's Government. Sir, I must say that the very converse of that view appears to me to be far more just. The opponents of the Reform Bill of 1832, although I can now see that they were wrong, yet had much to say for the course they pursued. They had to deal with a system the most complicated in the world; the springs and movements of which were hardly traceable to the common, or even to the philosophic eye, and which, like some wonderful creation that might have descended from above, was of such a delicacy of conformation, that they might, not wholly without reason, scruple to touch any of its parts, lest by deranging some hidden spring they should mar its movements; and so long had this state of things prevailed that even the wise man, that even the brave man, shrunk back from the responsibility of attempting such a task. How dif-

ferent is our case! 'We have seen the risks of the experiment run; we have seen the dangers, if such there were, of enfranchisement defied; we have seen the frequent prophecy, uttered in all solemnity, collapse almost as soon as delivered; we have witnessed the happiness and the blessed fruits of that constitutional change; and we have found ourselves launched upon a career, where everything before us is now comparatively plain and open. We have now to deal, I will not say with an alteration so much as with a growth of circumstances, with a growth of numbers, with a growth of wealth, with a growth of intelligence, with a growth of loyalty, with a growth of confidence in Parliament, and with a growth of attachment and of love among all classes of the community. And our view is this, that, under these circumstances, we are entitled to say that now again has the time arrived to apply, with circumspection and with caution, yet with firmness and decision, those principles from the operation of which we have already reaped such blessed fruits. It is in the prosecution of that work that we are confronted with the hostility which has met us in the various stages of this Bill; hostility that may be formidable, indeed hostility of which I will not even now presume to predict that it may not meet with a momentary success; but with regard to which I will say that any triumph, which may be gained, will recoil with tenfold force upon the heads of those who may achieve it. To be the chief sufferers in a cause such as that we have in hand is, indeed, to be preferred, not only to success of such a kind, but even to success attained in any ordinary cause. For we are well convinced that in the discharge of our own duty, in the redemption of our pledges, and of the pledges of Par-

liament, as we see and understand them, we are consulting at once the honour and the dignity of this House, the stability of the Throne on which Her Majesty receives the affectionate homage of her subjects, the contentment and happiness of the people, and the strength and endurance of our institutions.

LORD DUNKELLIN'S AMENDMENT.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: The honourable Gentleman who has just sat down has undisguisedly argued for the Amendment of my noble Friend (Lord Dunkellin) on the ground that it has a tendency to restrict the suffrage. My noble Friend has, indeed, said that he does not now propose to fix the Franchise at the figure at which it is to stand, but for the present I merely note the argument of the honourable Gentleman as indicating the tendency of the Amendment. And I further observe that my noble Friend himself, while disclaiming any intention to bind the House by his Motion, appeared to express his readiness to adopt as the standard of the franchise the rateable value of six pounds, which would materially curtail the plan of the Government, and which would at once prevent our proceeding with the Bill.

Now, Sir, I wish to point out to my noble Friend, and to the honourable Gentleman, that in all they have said, so far as it bears properly on the merits of the Motion, a fallacy has run through their speeches. They make a comparison between their proposed system of rateable value, and the system that now exists of a perfectly independent judicial examination, before the Revising Barrister, without the aid of the rate-book. All through the speech of my noble Friend, there was not a word to show he was cognizant of the great changes introduced by the Bill in this respect. I am not sure that my

noble Friend has so much as examined the table on which the rating is to be fixed, and seen whether there is or is not in that table a column of "gross estimated rental." If he is aware of the column of gross estimated rental in that table, and of the place it occupies in this Bill, it is only the more surprising that he should draw his contrast all along between the system of rateable value and the system that now prevails, and that he should have failed to notice the important change which we propose to introduce into the law. My noble Friend says he has drawn his Amendment from the Irish system. What the Irish system is I leave to be explained in detail by my honourable and learned Friend the Attorney-General for Ireland. In the mean time I will only say, that it is totally different from the system proposed to be introduced by my noble Friend. It is different, because it is entirely uniform throughout the whole country. It is different, because it is administered by Government officers. It is different, because it depends upon a basis of rating, which partakes in some degree of the system of rateable value, and in some degree of the column of gross estimated rental, but yet corresponds with neither. The Scotch system, as I understand it, does very nearly correspond with the column of gross estimated rental; and that system gives as much satisfaction in Scotland as the Irish system gives in Ireland. I do not find fault with the system that prevails in Ireland; but, since in its entirety it is plainly inapplicable to England, it cannot be copied; and, moreover, I contend that it has quite as much affinity with the system we propose, as it has with the system of rateable value. That may be no more than matter of opinion; I only allude to it for the sake of

collateral illustration. It is secondary in its bearing on the present question, because, as I have observed, the method proposed by the Amendment is not the Irish method. I will now go to the merits of the question.

After hearing the speech of my noble Friend, I could not help feeling that I might have saved him trouble, if I could have been permitted to state distinctly at the outset of the discussion the issue involved in this portion of the clause. My noble Friend, in his speech, has mingled together three or four questions that are in reality entirely distinct. He has apparently assumed that he is to produce, by the Motion which he makes, a variety of results, and all those he combines one with another; but in regard to some of them it appears doubtful whether his Motion would at all have the effect he desires, or not. One portion of the clause, which he proposes to amend, determines the moderate amount of enfranchisement which the Government seek to effect; an amount which I stated at the number of one hundred and forty-four thousand, by the reduction of the seven-pound franchise, and a further estimated addition of sixty thousand by the combined operation of the abolition of the rate-paying clauses, and of the new provisions relative to compound householders. From that moderate amount of enfranchisement, we are not, under any circumstances or conditions, prepared to recede. By it we intend to stand. There are various propositions to be brought before the notice of the House. The honourable and learned Member for Guildford (Mr. Bovill) proposes an eight-pound clause, and he would thus, I believe, substitute for the one hundred and forty-four thousand proposed by the Government an enfranchisement of seventy-nine thousand, thus striking off some

sixty-five thousand. The Small Tenements Act, which draws the line, not at six pounds, but at ratings over six pounds, gives an enfranchisement of sixty-seven thousand, instead of one hundred and forty-four thousand. The six-pound rating of my honourable Friend the Member for Wenlock (Mr. Gaskell) would give an enfranchisement of about one hundred and five thousand; a number which again falls short, this time by forty thousand, of the number we propose. That project, which the honourable Gentleman who has just sat down has had the satisfaction of suggesting to the House—namely, a seven-pound rating, would, thirty-four years after the Reform Bill, liberally condescend to introduce a new body of about forty-five thousand to the constituency. That would be at a rate of enfranchisement such as to include on the average an addition of about twelve hundred or fifteen hundred a year of the population of this country to the constituency. And certainly, if the honourable Gentleman can establish such a rate of enfranchisement as the rule which is to prevail for the guidance of our own and of future times, he will, I think, be pretty secure at least against any error in the way of excess. But, Sir, whether it be forty-five thousand or sixty-seven thousand, or one hundred and five thousand, I embrace all in the same category, and I frankly state that to no one of them are we prepared to accede.

The political part of this motion is one thing, and the practical part of it is another. But on the political part of it I would say that, although my noble Friend does not profess to fix the standard of the franchise by his motion, yet he lays down principles in his speech that would at once strike off sixty thousand from the numbers

we propose to enfranchise. We propose to abolish the rate-paying clause; and we introduce provisions that will enable compound householders to be registered with facility, though they may not be rated individually. To both of these provisions my noble Friend objects. Therefore he begins by striking off probably about sixty thousand from the number that we propose to enfranchise; and as he spoke with great favour of a six-pound rating instead of a seven-pound rental, I may assume that he would in this way strike off forty thousand more; so that he exactly bisects the effect of our proposal. [LORD DUNKELLIN was understood to say that he did not touch the law relating to compound householders.] I do not speak of my noble Friend's intention; but if he would leave the law respecting compound householders as it is, that means he would prevent the proposed alteration, which brings in practically the compound householders. My noble Friend would leave the law as it is with respect to compound householders; but, by the combined operation of what he says and what he proposes, he would strike off sixty thousand, and the proposal of the honourable Member for Wenlock (Mr. Gaskell) would strike off another forty thousand from our total enfranchisement; so that a deduction of one-half from the total enfranchisement in boroughs seems to be the aim of the more moderate among our opponents.

Having, then, spoken, I hope plainly and intelligibly, on that part of the subject, I come now to the practical effect of the clause, and to the argument raised by my noble Friend for a basis of rateable value, in lieu of the basis of clear yearly value, as proposed by the Government.

And, differing and departing entirely from the method

pursued in his argument by my noble Friend, who compared the thing he proposed with a thing which nobody proposed at all, I shall take the liberty of comparing his proposal with that proposal which we make to the House. Now, there are four questions that in this matter may be raised, which it is of vital consequence to keep separate and distinct, but which were inextricably mingled in the speech of my noble Friend. The first is, shall the voter himself personally be rated as a condition of his obtaining the franchise? The next is, shall he before registration be required to pay all rates which are at the time due from him? These two questions are absolutely and totally distinct from each other. You cannot, indeed, adopt the second provision without also adopting the first, but you may take the first without the second. Then the third question is, shall the franchise be ruled as it is ruled in this Bill, that is, upon the clear annual value, explained, and presumptively or in the first instance ascertained, by the column of gross estimated rental; or shall it be ruled by the column of rateable value? That is the third question; and that I take to be the proper object of my noble Friend's Motion. But he mixed these questions as if they had been one question all the way through his speech. ("No.") Then, let the matter be quite understood. If I have mistaken him, I am very glad; but I speak after attentively listening to his argument. Let it be understood, at any rate, that we have nothing to do now with determining whether the man himself shall be rated or not, or shall have paid his rates; and that those two questions are reserved for some future period. So then, the question now is, whether the value of the occupation, in right of which he is to vote, is to

be calculated upon the column of rateable value. But there is a fourth question of very great importance, and which my noble Friend—he will correct me if I am wrong—also treated as involved in his Motion, and that is as distinct from the third question as the third is distinct from the second and the first. It is the question whether the valuation made by the local authorities shall be final, or whether there shall be an appeal and a judicial process, should the voter desire it, before the Revising Barrister. In his Motion he takes it for granted that there is to be no appeal to the Revising Barrister. (Lord DUNKELLIN here observed that there is an appeal against the judgment of the Assessment Committee.) That I quite understand. My noble Friend proposes to leave the course of appeal for the vote such as it now stands for the purposes of local taxation; but he proposes to do away with the power of appeal to the Revising Barrister for the defence of a political privilege. Then, the third and fourth of these questions are embraced in the speech and in the design of the noble Lord.

I am bound to say I believe it to be at least doubtful, whether they are embraced with parallel effect by the words of his Motion. That the Motion would have the effect of fixing upon rateable value as the *prima facie* ground on which the franchise of occupation must be considered and estimated is perfectly clear; but I do not know whether the noble Lord has referred to the very strong language in which the Revising Barrister is authorised by the Reform Act to insert in the list of voters the name of every person who shall be proved to his satisfaction to be entitled on the last day of July then next preceding. [Mr. WALPOLE: "That

is, according to the value."] Certainly: but I apprehend it may be doubtful whether that might not be held to make the title of the voter still subject to review by the Revising Barrister, and whether the Revising Barrister, not finding that there are any absolute words which make the rateable value as stated in the columns of the rate-book decisive for the purposes of the Act, might not say, "I will take the case on the ground of the rateable value, but I will ascertain whether the rateable value has been rightly calculated by the local authorities." That I take to be an ambiguity; and if so, it is an ambiguity in a matter which ought to be removed; I do not, however, take it to be more.

I had better, however, deal with the Motion as it is intended by my noble Friend, and consider that we have now before us a proposal which does these two things. In the first place, it fixes that the occupation, in right of which a man is to vote, is to be estimated according to the column of rateable value; and, in the second place, the Revising Barrister is to be ousted altogether, and the course of appeal is to be that which is provided for the purposes of local taxation, and no other. That is the intention, with which the Motion is made by my noble Friend. Then so far, at any rate, we get upon firm, or at least upon clear, ground. And we must accordingly put out of view everything that has been said about the test of character afforded by the actual payment of rates and other matters of that kind, for they are not in any way touched by the motion, and with them at present we have no concern whatever. Therefore, Sir, I will address myself to those two questions. And, first, as to the question of rateable value,

which it is proposed for the first time in this country to adopt as the basis of the political franchise. We have argued—and no person has been able to show the reverse—that rateable value is a test false in principle. Rateable value is intended to establish the net value of the property. Rateable value is the just, the obvious, the legitimate basis of any or of all such operations as have reference to local taxation. The honourable Gentleman opposite referred to the clever letter of Mr. Baxter in the *Times* of this morning. That letter shows us that there are eight or ten Acts of Parliament, which take the rateable value as the basis and standard of the powers they confer. Certainly, and most properly, they do; for every one of them, with perhaps a single and insignificant exception, applies to local taxation. But who pays local taxation? The right honourable Member for Oxfordshire (Mr. Henley) spoke as if the tenant ultimately and really paid local taxation. On the contrary, every economist must admit that it is borne by the property; and, as it is borne by the property, the test of rateable value being that which enables you to ascertain the true or net value, the value to the landlord, it is of course with perfect propriety made the basis of local taxation. And we should be as inconsistent and incongruous in our plans if we proposed a departure from the basis of rateable value for the purpose of taxing property, as I aver that my noble Friend is inconsistent in taking rateable value as the basis of the law for fixing the political franchise. The proper basis of political franchise, dependent on occupation, is not the net value of the property to the landlord, but is the capacity of the occupier to pay. And whether the sum be seven pounds, ten pounds, fourteen pounds

or any other amount that is paid as rent, that is the just and good test of the capacity of the voter to pay, whatever may be the rateable value that is set against his occupation. The rateable value has nothing whatever to do with the point we have now in view. It goes to a different end. It is constructed for a different purpose. And, if we are really to argue this, which, after all, ought to be a practical question, with reference to the reason of the case, and are not to be governed by the latent purposes of honourable Gentlemen opposite, who may wish to accomplish restriction under the name of enfranchisement, and may prefer, perhaps, a colourable motion to one directly aiming at that object, then let us really follow the true reason of the case, and take the rateable value for those things to which it is applicable, but decline to take it for those things with which it has no natural connection.

But then I come to the question of inequalities. Now, those inequalities are of two descriptions—namely, inequalities arising from caprice or carelessness, and inequalities arising from necessity and the nature of the case. It is not denied that both kinds of inequality exist. But, then, my noble Friend draws an ingenious comparison between the supposed owners of imaginary properties on two sides of a street. He naturally enough assigns to the old proprietor on the one side of the street the graceful function of allowing his property to be let below its true value; and the new proprietor, who owns the houses on the other side, he describes on the other hand as divested of every human feeling, and intent only upon extorting from the tenants the last farthing they can pay. Well, Sir, let that pass. But my noble Friend thinks that his reference to two

sides of a street makes against the gross estimated rental, and in favour of the rateable value. Now, does it so make? He says, "Here is a man who is bent on extracting the last penny out of his fellow-creatures: and with his gigantic fortune he buys up all the houses on one side of a street." He put a case where on one side of the street the landlord is a gentleman descended from a long line of ancesters—a class, he says, always free from the slightest taint of avarice—and has a number of houses paying him seven pounds a year; and the gentleman owning the property on the other side of the street has tenants in houses which pay ten pounds, or a still higher figure, while all the time the houses at seven pounds are as good as the houses at ten pounds; and then he says, observe how unequal in its operation is the gross estimated rental. Well, but precisely the same inequality, which would thus be established in the case of gross estimated rental, would also of necessity appear in the column of rateable value. But if, in addition to the inequality thus established, it happens that one side of the street is in one Union and the other in another, different rates of deduction being often fixed in two Unions although adjacent, why, then, I say the inequality would be not only reproduced, but aggravated. And I challenge any man confidently, who may argue in this debate, to point out any single source of error which can come into the column of gross estimated rental, and which will not pass on unremedied into the column of rateable value; whereas we can point out a number of errors apt to creep into the column of rateable value which are not to be found, and which cannot appear, in the column of gross esti-

mated rental at all. And this vital point my noble Friend has wholly omitted to observe.

Sir, I quoted some of the cases applicable to this argument the other day. The honourable Member for Northampton was good enough, since the former debate on rating, to give me a note which he had received, contradicting the statement which I had made as to the case of Bury St. Edmunds; but I quoted from official documents, in which the statement was given in detail (and it is open to the inspection of the honourable Gentleman), to show that, from houses of the same value situate in two different parishes of the same town, the deductions amounted in one case to one-tenth, and in the other to one-sixth. Now, that is a source of error in the rateable value column, additional to, and independent of, any errors which may be found in the column of gross estimated rental. Does the same hold good in the Irish system? [Lord Dunkellin: "No. There is only one column there."] Then, if there is only one column, my noble Friend has no right to argue from the Irish system in favour of his plan of rateable value. It is for every purpose a different system from ours; and the noble Lord has evidently been misled, by the use of the word "rating," into supposing that it is the same system, when for the purposes of the present argument the fact is entirely otherwise.

Here, again, is the case of Oxford: which gentlemen may, if they be so minded, study for themselves. They have not, indeed the verified documents before them; to have presented all the particulars would have entailed a great deal of additional and quite needless trouble; but I have taken the figures I now state from the blue-book,

where they are given in a summary form. In the case of Oxford, the deductions are in one parish 20 per cent., and in another 33⅓; and these deductions are not thus diversely made because in one parish the materials of the dwellings are good and durable, and in the other flimsy and unsubstantial, for the rates I have named are applied to buildings of the same class, according to value, in the two parishes. If gentlemen will study these most useful papers, they will find that the inequalities there recorded are almost always inequalities in deductions upon houses of the same class and character, and that they grow wholly or mainly out of differences in the views taken by different Assessment Committees. Again, take the case of Liverpool. At Everton and Kirkdale the deductions amount to 20 per cent.; at Toxteth they reach 25 per cent.; while in Liverpool itself there is an uniform deduction of 10 per cent. I mean in Liverpool, strictly so called; but Everton, Kirkdale, and Toxteth are substantially parts of Liverpool. Hence, the Motion of the noble Lord is, I do not hesitate to affirm, a proposal that we should deliberately establish different political franchises in the same towns. Men whose circumstances are in every respect the same, who live in the same place, and under the same local government, who associate together as fellow-townsmen, inhabiting houses for which they pay equal rents, will yet be placed at different amounts in the rate-book, and consequently one will obtain while the other will be debarred from the franchise, simply because they happen to reside in different Unions though in the same town.

But then it is said, "Let the Unions make their rates more equally." That is all very well to say, but the

thing is not done; and it would be a very difficult thing to effect. How are we to induce many hundreds of these local bodies, not liable to penalty, or direct control, to take precisely the same view of such a subject as that of the deductions to be made from gross estimated rental? We may with time make, by degrees, some further approximation to equality; but we shall never attain equality without introducing a central authority. If we are prepared to have a central authority (which manifestly we are not), going round from Union to Union, and fixing in each the basis upon which local taxation is to be paid, then, I grant, the thing may be done; but even then it could only be done in time. But to this suppression of an important particular of local self-government, I do not believe that Parliament will consent. And even if it did, and if the system had worked all we could expect from it, what would happen? You would not get rid of the second portion of the difficulty; for, though these inequalities which have reference to the different materials and durability and solidity of dwellings, are objectionable with respect to the political franchise, yet for the purposes of local taxation they are inequalities that ought to be retained. If there are two houses, the ordinary repairs of one of which amount to five per cent., and the other to twenty per cent., the effect will be, in the case of two men paying equal rents, that you will enfranchise one and disfranchise the other. And this, remember, even when your reefing has been made absolutely perfect. If, on the other hand, in order to get over that difficulty and gross solecism, you compound, and in both cases fix the deductions at twelve and a half per cent., you merely change the injustice from the right hand to the left, and

you commit just as real and palpable a wrong with regard to the purposes of local taxation, as you committed before with regard to the purposes of the political franchise.

Again, Sir, I do not think my noble Friend has remembered that there are certain descriptions of property in this country, which are not rated at all. Under our Bill, there is nothing to be done but to ascertain the clear annual value, and the owner would become at once enfranchised; but according to the proposal of my noble Friend, the occupier of the premises, inasmuch as they carry no rateable value, could not appear upon the rate-book at all, nor have his case examined; and therefore the effect of his Amendment in this point would be to disfranchise (for example) all the owners of mines in Cornwall; for I suppose as matter of course that my noble Friend will seek to apply to the counties the principle for which he contends, and at the proper season to remodel the clause, that has already passed the Committee, in accordance with his view.

It is argued, indeed, by my noble Friend, that the old precedent of scot and lot is in favour of his proposal; but the old precedent of scot and lot has nothing to do with his argument or his plan. So far as it really bears upon the present subject, it is an argument that goes in favour of household suffrage; and a good deal of my noble Friend's speech tended, whether with his own consciousness or not, in that direction. Scot and lot had no relation whatever to amount. It was perfectly insignificant whether your rateable value was correct or incorrect; whether you were rated at one penny or at one hundred pounds, was totally immaterial; it was the

simple fact of paying a rate that constituted a title by scot and lot. I will not go back upon the Acts, such as Local Government Acts, Health of Towns Acts, and others, which have made such an impression on the mind of the honourable Member for Shoreham that he hardly knew what to say, and complained that the materials which ought to have formed his speech had been anticipated, he almost seemed to say had been filched from him, by the references made in Mr. Baxter's printed letter to their provisions. I believe there is one single case, the Beerhouse Act—rather a narrow foundation for a Parliamentary Constitution—where rateable value is the test, and where the law is notwithstanding one that does not relate to purposes of taxation. Neither does it relate to political privilege. The general rule is that the test of rateable value should in all cases be connected with local taxation, and with the distribution of local power. That is a good and rational law, but good and rational because adapted to its end; and it would become bad and irrational, if it were carried over to the purpose that is now proposed, and applied to an end for which it has no aptitude whatever.

I come, Sir, to another question of great moment; the proposal to oust the Revising Barrister. I think it very much to be regretted that this question should be raised incidentally to another matter, quite difficult and complex enough in itself; but it was a point, apparently the main if not the only point, on which the right honourable Gentleman the Member for Oxfordshire dwelt the other night. He saw, what I confess I had not seen at first, that the honourable Member for Northampton intended to get rid of the Revising

Barrister, and to fix the matter of the suffrage upon a basis admitting of no appeal except to local authority.

Mr. HUNT: As regards the occupiers.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: Certainly, as regards that class of voters who are to vote in respect of occupation, and not of property.

Mr. WHITESIDE: The value would determine the right to the franchise.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: Yes, but it would determine it in a different mode from the present, and in a different mode from the mode proposed by the Bill.

This question of the Revising Barrister is one of very considerable extent and difficulty. It is also one that I think it would be very desirable to discuss in a separate form, and not incidentally to this other matter of rateable value. I admit that it would be a great object to get rid of the costs and the trouble of registration, even as to a portion of the constituency. But the benefits of that object, if you gained it, would be lost, if you were to introduce the very same class of questions upon another arena, to be decided by authorities less judicial and less competent. The effect of that would be that, though you might change the tribunal, you would increase the litigation. Again, it is a very serious matter—I do not know what precedent for it my honourable Friend has been able to find in our Parliamentary history—it is a very serious matter to propose, that the political rights of the people, in respect of admission to the franchise, shall be placed in the hands of local Government and of the local authorities. That is a very grave and most serious question, which ought

to receive much more attention from us than it can receive while hopelessly mixed up with questions, apparently as yet so little understood as that of rateable value.

But, again, the large majority of the boroughs of this country—of course, I mean, of the small boroughs—are boroughs united to extraneous parishes; united, for Poor Law purposes, with a great number of rural parishes in the neighbourhood. Those parishes are represented on the Board by one or more Guardians. Every parish, however small, is represented by a Guardian. The consequence is that the Board is often constituted, in an overwhelming proportion, of the Guardians from rural parishes; and the proposal in all such cases comes to this, that these Guardians from rural parishes should practically fix the franchise for the boroughs. I am glad to see my noble Friend shake his head. It may be said that there is an appeal; but even if that be so, I must observe it is not enough to say you provide a good appeal. Your business is to provide a good tribunal in the first instance; but I believe I am correct in stating that in a large majority of the boroughs of this country the Guardians of the rural districts would fix the borough franchise if the Motion of my noble Friend were carried.

Mr. HUNT: The Assessment Committee of the Union, and not the Guardians, act in the matter.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: The Members of that Committee are the elected representatives of the Board of Guardians.

Mr. HUNT: The Board of Guardians have to appoint them. They appoint a certain number of magistrates and a certain number of ratepayers, and therefore I

should think the country parishes will not be able to override the town parishes.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: I do not think the statement of the honourable Gentleman, correct as it is, has at all improved the cas because the Board of Guardians, which is empowered t choose the Assessment Committee, may be composed, in an overwhelming proportion, of the Guardians from rural parishes. I find that by a clause in the Act of 1862 upon parochial assessments, it is provided that the Guardians shall appoint from among themselves a committee of not less than six nor more than twelve members for the assessment of the Union, and that one-third of such Committee, at least, shall consist of *ex-officio* Guardians.

Sir HUGH CAIRNS: Read the next clause, which contains a provision for the appointment of an equal number by the Town Council.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: Yes, but, as I perceive, only in those instances where the Union has the same bounds as the Borough; that is to say, in the cases to which I have made no reference whatever. I was entitled to presume that I might take the meaning of the clause from the honourable and learned Gentleman's assurance; but really, if I had taken it from his assurance, I should have had reason to regret the consequences. I repeat then, Sir, that it would be a serious thing to give the fixing of the political franchise to local persons—persons connected, as, happily I think, the great bulk of Englishmen are, with political parties, and not restrained, as a Revising Barrister is restrained, from indulging their political proclivities by judicial habits and judicial knowledge. All this, however, I urge, not as conclusive at once upon the merits of the

case, but as deserving most careful and most dispassionate consideration, which it could only receive on a separate occasion.

Now, I take another point. Supposing that, in a small borough, an Assessment Committee, with a view to political objects, underrated one hundred voters; one hundred voters would turn the scale in a small borough. Suppose an inhabitant of a borough ought to be rated at seven pounds, but that, instead of rating him at that amount, the Assessment Committee put him down at six pounds fifteen shillings—which they might do if the Member for Shoreham has his way, and if he or his friends form their Government for the purpose of carrying a seven-pound rating franchise into law; the effect would be that these inhabitants would not have a vote. Now, this might be done in one hundred cases, and the cost would be very small. It would only amount to the loss of the rate on some twenty or thirty pounds; and would it not be worth incurring such a loss to disqualify one hundred opponents? Nor is it of much avail to urge that another ratepayer might appeal against this under-rating of his neighbours. For the appeal would have but little chance where the divergence from the true amount was small. Now, Sir, I do not intend to insinuate, nor do I think, that every man is a rogue. Suppose, however, that (as I fear we must suppose) some persons are actually rogues, or suppose a man who, not being a rogue, is at all events an eager or even an unscrupulous partisan, or again who, without deserving these epithets, is so far weak or prejudiced as to be subject to bias on one side or the other; and I ask whether there would not be afforded to such a person varied opportunities of depriving a number of opponents

of their votes at a very small cost? I may be told, perhaps, that the ratepayer himself might appeal, and might have his rate raised. I do not know whether it has been decided that a person can appeal to have his own rate raised. But I can, on the other hand, imagine a case in which it might be desirable to procure a few votes by raising the assessment. Suppose a seven-pound rating franchise be adopted, and that one hundred persons were rated at six pounds fifteen shillings, you might increase their ratings to seven pounds five shillings, or even a smaller sum; thus making votes at a cost much the same as that to which I referred in connection with the contrary process. The whole amount of loss would perhaps be not more than fifty pounds a year of the rateable value. I dare say that the Assessment Committee would, in such a case, take care not to overrate any one who would not be prepared to bear it, and ten shillings a year would not be a serious addition to the assessment. That might easily be arranged; for remember that no one else but the person rated could appeal against the assessment on the ground of excess; even if he can appeal, of which I am not aware. The honourable and learned Member for Belfast will correct me if I am wrong, and I will take his correction without a word; but I think I am correct in stating that beyond all doubt no one else could appeal in such a case against the rate.

It appears to me, therefore, that we run some risk of introducing into our assessments a number of elements, some of which, apparently, are of considerable danger.

Whether it would be possible, either now or hereafter, so to control those elements that we might venture to encounter the risk, for the sake of the advan-

tages in view, I for one will not pretend to say. I admit the great value of a test, if it were good in itself, which would have the effect of getting rid of a great number of questions which are now raised before the Revising Barrister. But the goodness of the test is the very thing to be established. What we contend for is not that the local authorities as such are untrustworthy; but that the local authorities require to be kept under check, and that they should not be led into temptation by being carried, without such a check, beyond their proper and accustomed province.

Now, what is the test which we propose? The gross estimated rental; that is, in our judgment, the first thing to be got at. Where are the errors in the gross estimated rental, which are not to be found in the rateable value? In looking for the basis which we required, we called in aid the gross estimated rental. What does our Bill do? It adheres to the words of the Bill of 1832, in providing that the franchise shall be founded on the "clear yearly value:" but in the interpretation clause it states—

"The clear yearly value as applied to any premises shall mean a sum equivalent in amount to any rent a tenant might reasonably be expected to pay by the year for such premises if let to him, he undertaking to pay all usual tenant's rates and taxes and tithe commutation rentcharge (if any), but no deductions being made in respect of the probable annual average cost of repairs, insurance, and other expenses, if any, necessary to maintain the premises in a state to command such rent; and for the purposes of this Act the gross estimated rental for the time being of any premises as ascertained for the purposes of the poor-rate shall, until the contrary

is proved, be deemed to be the clear annual value of such premises."

Now, the Committee will see from these words, that we do not reject the rate-book: we go straight to the rate-book; as straight as my noble Friend himself goes to it. The consideration, which weighs on his mind, weighs on ours. We are satisfied of the great advantage of getting the use and assistance of a public document, made up for distinct purposes, and from independent sources; but the difference between us and my noble Friend is this; we go to the right part of the rate-book; he goes to the wrong part of it. We go to the point, which is nearest to certainty; while the noble Lord goes to the point, which is furthest from certainty. I wish seriously to call the attention of my noble Friend to the point which I am now going to name, and I hope, that in all I have said I have given him credit for every sincerity of purpose. I accused him, indeed, of confusing some points which should have been kept distinct, but, whether I was right in regard to that charge or not, at all events what he is now dealing with is, the valuable principle of making use of the rate-book as far as we are able. And I say we make use of it. If he says that he would use it more than we do, in one sense it may be so; but I assert, and I think I have shown, that the true way of amending our procedure is not the way he proposes. Beyond this, the right honourable Gentleman the Member for Oxfordshire and the honourable Member for Northamptonshire desire to oust the Revising Barrister. Well, there are, I admit, two sides to that question; and it is one which may be fairly discussed. But the immediate and essential question now before the House is not that of the Re-

vising Barrister; it is whether we should take for our basis the column of gross estimated rental, which is the column that contains the smallest risks and the fewest sources of error. Now, I put it to my noble Friend whether every object, which he wishes to attain by resorting to the rateable value, will not be attained much more largely and effectually by resorting to the gross estimated column. I put it to him that this, at all events, even on his own showing, must be doubtful. I put it to him and to the House, that the question as to the Revising Barrister is one which requires much consideration, and which ought to be made the subject of a separate discussion. But if my noble Friend is right, and if the time has come when we can safely oust the Revising Barrister—on which subject I give no final opinion—and submit the final adjustment of this matter to the local authorities, then beyond all dispute the proper way is to refer to those authorities, not the rateable value column, but the column of gross estimated rental. For the gross estimated rental rests in the main on matters of fact; and where the law is obeyed, as it commonly is even now, and as we hope it would be universally with the aid of the provisions of our Bill, it comes close upon the exact truth. But rateable value, involving as it does many matters of opinion, and likewise requiring, in order to be good for its own purpose, conditions which are bad for our purpose, is a test of an inferior order, which we cannot wisely or consistently adopt.

On these grounds, I hope the House will reject the Motion of my noble Friend. I am not at all surprised that on the former occasion the majority of honourable Members, who supported the proposal of the Government, was so small; because I know very well,

and every one who has had much experience in such affairs must know, that it is extremely difficult, in minute and complicated questions of this kind, to bring large bodies of persons, even in this House, at once to a close and accurate knowledge of the facts. For the last twenty years, there has been a great and growing sense of the inconveniences and the great expenditure connected with Registration. We share in that conviction; and we are ready to take every means to diminish the evil. The consequence of this feeling has been a great desire to resort to an external standard. But, until within the last three years, there was no external standard which even in the remotest degree approached to accuracy, except the standard of rateable value, and that standard was so defective that it was found unavailable. Then came in my right honourable Friend the President of the Poor Law Board, and passed an important Act. And what was that important Act? It was a reform, not of the rateable value column, but of the important executory provisions relating to the column which gave the gross estimated rental. It laid down fixed rules for the formation of the column of gross estimated rental, and made it a safe and secure basis for the column of rateable value. But, after we had all so long accustomed ourselves to speak of the advantage of making use of the aid which might be derived from the rate-book, I am not surprised, and I do not at all complain, that my noble Friend should have interpreted that reference to the rate-book to mean exclusively the column of rateable value. But I put it to him, as a candid man, that every advantage possessed by his proposition is possessed by ours, as far as the choice between the two columns is concerned; that the

intrinsic superiority of the gross estimated rental column is indisputable, and, in fact, is almost undisputed in this House; and finally, that if he be right in saying that the decisions of the local authorities should be made final in this matter, those decisions ought to be founded, not upon the inferior test of rateable value, but on the superior criterion of gross estimated rental.

RESIGNATION OF THE MINISTRY.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: Mr. Speaker, the suspense which the House yesterday so considerately consented to prolong is at an end; Her Majesty having been pleased to accept the resignations of our offices, which were last week tendered by us Her Servants. The House is aware, that, when that tender was first made, Her Majesty thought fit in her wisdom to postpone the acceptance of it. It appeared to Her Majesty, upon the first aspect of the vote which led to the tender of our resignations, that the subject-matter of that vote might perhaps be considered as a matter of machinery and detail susceptible of adjustment, rather than as one which went to break up the framework of the Bill relating to the Representation of the People; while Her Majesty also felt—and I think the House and the country, without distinction of party, will agree in that sentiment—that, in the present state of affairs on the Continent of Europe, there would necessarily be a disadvantage in a change of Government. Without the slightest approach to any invidious reference, or distinction between parties or individuals, it may truly be said that, at such a moment, it is not easy for any in-coming Administration to step at once into exactly the same relations and conditions of intercourse with Governments and Ministers abroad, which were enjoyed after long usage by their predecessors; and the amount of that difficulty, whatever it may be, is in itself

a public disadvantage. Her Majesty upon these grounds thought fit to postpone her acceptance of our resignations, as the House has been informed, until she should have had an opportunity of personal conference with my noble Friend at the head of the Government. This day I accompanied my noble Friend to Windsor; and the opportunity was graciously afforded him of submitting those explanations, which appeared to us to warrant the course we had pursued, and of laying before Her Majesty the full circumstances of the case. Upon receiving those explanations, the tender which had been postponed was accepted by Her Majesty; and we now, by Her Majesty's gracious commands, only retain the seals of our offices until the time when our successors shall have been appointed. Having stated thus much, I think it is due from the Government to the House that we should not confine ourselves absolutely on such an occasion to the dry recital of the result arrived at in the communications with Her Majesty; but that, while endeavouring to avoid all contested and controverted ground, we should submit some explanations to the House, of a nature to show that, in the step which we have taken, we have not acted unadvisedly, nor without all the care which the subject demands.

After the division, Sir, which took place on Monday, and during the interval which has since occurred, the alternative which the Members of the Government have appeared to have principally before them, as the most immediate and legitimate subject of consideration in the present state of the country, has been this; whether it was their duty at once to resign their offices, or whether, on the other hand, they ought to accept the vote which had been arrived at on the Motion of my noble Friend

the Member for Galway, and to endeavour, so far as they could, to adapt that vote, and any changes consequent upon it, to the framework of their measure, and to the attainment of its essential object.

Next, Sir, let me state briefly the view which we took of the nature and effect of the vote. We did, I avow, carefully examine it, in order to see whether it was in our power to effect such an adaptation as I have spoken of. The House may, perhaps, recollect that at the close of the debate the words I ventured to use on the part of the Government did not amount to an absolute statement that, if the Amendment of my noble Friend were carried against us, we should feel it impossible to conduct the further progress of the Bill; but they did express the state of difficulty in which we found ourselves with respect to the possibility of the adoption of such a vote; and I was obliged to say that we could enter into no engagement as to our conduct in the event of an adverse decision, but that we must remain free to take such course as the public interests might appear to demand.

Now, Sir, when we came to examine the real bearing of the motion, and to consider whether it was possible for us to adopt it, we were struck by these difficulties; in the first place, by the inequalities of the operation of a rating franchise in different boroughs; in the second place, by the inequalities of its operation in the same borough; and, in the third place, by the difficulty, I might say the impossibility, of choosing any form or figure of enfranchisement, founded on mere relation to rateable value, which would express faithfully and exactly, without material deviation on one side or the other, the scale of enfranchisement which we had contemplated

and submitted to the House, and to which we thought ourselves bound, not so much by any pedantic reference to consistency or any merely formal view of the case, as by a consideration of the public interests. As to the operation of a six-pound rating franchise, which was suggested by the noble Mover of the Amendment, we found that it would give rise to the inequalities I will now state; and the figures I give can be tested, as to their substantial accuracy, by any honourable Member who chooses to refer to the blue-book laid on the table. We had submitted to the House a plan, under which a certain number of male occupiers would be enfranchised by an occupation franchise of seven pounds in boroughs. We have now asked ourselves, "In the case of each borough, to what amount of rating franchise must we go down in order to obtain not less than the number which would be given by an occupation franchise of seven pounds?" We found the following to be the result. In sixteen boroughs there would have been enfranchised, by adopting a franchise founded on a rateable value of above six pounds, a number equal to or above the number we proposed to enfranchise. In thirty-nine boroughs we should have required to take not merely those above six-pound rating, but of six pounds and upwards. In one hundred and twelve boroughs we must have gone to five pounds and upwards. In twenty-one boroughs we must have gone so low as to four pounds and upwards. In five boroughs it required us to take in even those rated under four pounds, in order to insure our having a number not less than that which would be obtained by a seven-pound rental. Now, I give these figures as being simply the result of a sum. On their general accuracy I rely: and their general accuracy is

enough. It is not for me to judge what weight they may have with others, but in our minds they had considerable weight.

We then considered another matter, on which I need not dwell largely at this moment, for it has been opened and argued in our past debates. We felt very acutely the difficulties in which we should be involved from the establishment of different rates of franchise in the same borough, owing to the differences of rating which frequently prevail in different parts of the same town, when those parts happen to lie within different Unions.

Lastly, we had this to consider; if we proposed a six-pound rated franchise, such a proposal involved on the whole a diminution of enfranchisement, which in our view was inadmissible. Had we, on the other hand, proposed a five-pound rated franchise; we should have exposed ourselves to taunts and objections, the precise value of which I do not stop to estimate; but undoubtedly there would have been ground for the statement that we had departed materially from the original framework of, and the standing-ground afforded by, our Bill.

These, Sir, were among the considerations, which led us to the conclusion that the vote on the Motion of my noble Friend could not be considered as of a minor or incidental character, but was one which went in a great degree to break up the framework of the measure. And even this, I must add, was not the whole, nor nearly the whole, of our difficulty. We had to consider our position as a whole; we had to consider the previous history of the proceedings on the Bill; and undoubtedly, in our particular case, the issue was additionally grave

and anxious, because of the pledges we had given in various forms, and of which we had, not unnaturally nor improperly, been reminded time after time in the course of the debates, to stand or fall by our measure. Now, Sir, those pledges, if they seemed to some to be conveyed at any time in rhetorical and inflated forms, were yet, as to their substance, in every case advisedly and deliberately given. In the opinion of the Cabinet, and in my own opinion, a pledge on the part of the Government to stand or fall by a particular measure is a pledge that should be rarely hazarded. It is the last weapon in the armoury of a Government; it should not be lightly taken down from the wall; and if it is so taken down it should not lightly be replaced, nor until it has served the purpose it was meant to fulfil. Sir, that pledge had been given by us, in the present instance, under the deepest conviction, whether erroneous or just it matters not for the present purpose, of our public duty. We looked back over the course of fifteen years; we considered what had been the prior history of this question; we did not take into consideration merely the inherent greatness of the subject; we considered its inconvenient, its mischievous operation during many of those years upon the characters of public men, and upon the character of parties; and further and yet more, permit me to say, upon what is higher still, upon the character of Parliament, and upon the character and credit of representative institutions. We felt that the stake was a stake of the highest order; that the responsibility of error was great; that it was our duty to use every effort in our power to avoid offence, to conciliate support, to unite, instead of distracting, the minds of men; last, and above all, that it was our duty firmly

and resolutely to prosecute whatever plan we might adopt; and there is, and can be, no such thing as a firm and resolute prosecution of a subject of such magnitude, except by attaching the life of the Administration to the life of the measure they propose.

That, therefore, was the course we took advisedly and deliberately, not for our own sakes alone, but for the sake of far higher and far deeper interests, involving that which is the first condition of good government in this or in any country; I mean, the confidence of the public in the institutions by which, and in the men by whom, they are ruled. Along with that anxiety we had a disposition, perhaps erroneous, but most sincere, to conciliate honourable Members who were timid or fastidious, and even such as might be possibly opposed to us, on the subject of Reform, at the expense, as I am bound frankly to say, of those by whom Reform was ardently supported. What are the facts? In 1860 a measure had been proposed involving as its bases a ten-pound and a six-pound franchise, which would have extended the suffrage to not fewer than four hundred and sixty thousand persons. For those ten-pound and six-pound franchises, we proposed to substitute franchises of seven pounds and fourteen pounds. The effect of this change was, to reduce the number thus to be enfranchised from four hundred and sixty thousand to three hundred thousand or thereabouts; in other words, to sacrifice about one-third of the enfranchisement which the provisions that I have cited from the Bill of 1860 would have effected. We thought that was a very large concession to make; we thought it was better to make it early than to make it late; and, having made it, it was impossible for us not to see that this very con-

cession rendered it our duty to attach a stricter interpretation, than we might otherwise have been warranted in giving, to the pledge we had furnished to the country, to stand or fall by our Bill.

I may be permitted likewise to say, as I have said before, without intending reproach to any one, that it was our opinion, and an opinion upon which we acted, that no secondary difficulty, no secondary consideration, should be allowed to interfere with our making progress with the Bill. Accordingly we consented to make changes in our mode of procedure upon the Bill, such as I believe have been rarely made in the case of any great measure, introduced deliberately, and persevered in, by a Government. We agreed cheerfully, though against our own opinions, to produce a Bill for the Redistribution of Seats; we agreed that that Bill should be united with the Bill we had already submitted to the House. On both these points, we yielded to the wish of the majority of the House, waiving, though not disguising, our own convictions; because we held that, however just we might deem our own opinion to be, it did not warrant the serious public evil of a conflict with the majority of the House of Commons upon a question respecting the representation of the people, especially after what had happened with regard to that representation in former years. In the same manner, when some provisions of the Bill, which appeared to us, though valuable, yet to be capable of being parted with, became matter of objection, we agreed to withdraw them. We agreed to withdraw the clause respecting leasehold voters in boroughs. We agreed to modify the fourth clause in a point which was deemed to be of much importance. These modifications were acceded

to at the instance of honourable Gentlemen opposite; and it will be recollected that the last of them excited lively expostulations from a large number of gentlemen on our own side of the House, who thought it their duty, from the strength of the convictions they entertained, to give expression to them by a division. There remained but one point of difference in regard to procedure, and that was upon the earnest wish we entertained to pass a measure upon the subject during the present year. With respect to that matter, when challenged to repeat in strong terms the expression of our desire, we deliberately waived any such repetition, because we felt that it was invidious, and that it might even be disrespectful, to flourish as it were a declaration of that nature in the face of the House of Commons; while we covered even that remaining subject by a general declaration, made by me in words expressly authorised by my colleagues, that we should be loath indeed to quarrel with the House, or with any portion of the House which might appear to be agreed with us as to the object we had in view, upon any question whatever of procedure.

However, Sir, we find that these, which I will now enumerate, were the proceedings upon the Bill. On the 27th of April, my noble Friend the Member for Chester (Earl Grosvenor) made a Motion as an Amendment to the second reading, the effect of which would have been that we should have been compelled to produce the Seats Bill, before the House had given any vote or indication whatever upon the Bill I had laid upon the table. That Motion, as is known to honourable Members, was rejected, in a House unprecedentedly large, by a majority of only five, the numbers being

three hundred and thirteen for, and three hundred and eighteen against, the Motion. The next step in the progress of the question, which it may be well to notice, was that adopted by the House on the 28th of May; when the honourable Baronet (Sir Rainald Knightley) made a Motion to instruct the Committee on the Representation of the People Bill to include in the Bill clauses for the repression of bribery and corruption. Our difficulty already was, and was well known to be, the overweight of the measure, and the almost impossibility of finding time to consider it. We remonstrated against the proposal; we pointed out that at least that course had not been pursued on former occasions; the House thought fit to overrule the views of the Government; and by a majority of ten the honourable Baronet carried his Motion. I do not at this moment ask whether he was right or wrong. I am only speaking of the obstacles which we found besetting us, on our road towards the end we had in view. But I proceed. On the 4th of June another Motion was made, in avowed concert with the party opposite, by my honourable and gallant Friend the Member for Wells (Captain Hayter), which certainly ended without a division, but which was debated for three nights; and which evidently must have had, and was intended to have, the effect of setting aside the consideration of the Bill for the present year. On the 7th of June, the noble Lord the Member for King's Lynn (Lord Stanley) made a Motion for the purpose of postponing the clauses of enfranchisement to the clauses affecting the re-distribution of Seats. Sir, that Motion was made without any public notice whatever. But it came within the knowledge of the Government at a subsequent period that, through channels I am not able

to point out, information that either that Motion, or some such Motion, would be made on that day and at that hour, had been conveyed to certain gentlemen on this side of the House, whose views appeared likely to be favourable to the Motion. Notwithstanding these circumstances, a minority of two hundred and sixty gentlemen supported the Motion of the noble Lord; it was, however, rejected by two hundred and eighty-seven. We were then met by the right honourable Gentleman the Member for Cambridge University, who proposed to raise the county franchise from fourteen pounds to twenty pounds, and thereby to maim, in our view—at all events, greatly to alter—I withdraw the word "maim," for I wish to use no word that can seem to savour of eagerness or of exaggeration—one of the fundamental clauses of the Bill. The Motion was rejected, but rejected by a very small majority; by no more than fourteen. Then came on, in another form, a Motion also admitted to have for one of its objects the raising of the county franchise, I mean the Motion of the honourable Member for Northampton (Mr. Hunt), to substitute a rated value of fourteen pounds for the clear annual value of that amount. That Motion also was rejected; but only by a majority of seven. Then, last of all, came the seventh of these determined struggles, the Motion of my noble Friend the Member for Galway (Lord Dunkellin), raising the very same point for the boroughs which had been rejected for the counties by this majority of only seven, although it is within the knowledge of us all that, whatever difficulties attach to the use of the column of rateable value, be they great or small, they are undoubtedly difficulties which will be felt much more in the boroughs, than in the counties.

That Motion, however, was carried by a majority of eleven. And it was upon a deliberate review of this series of facts—from the recital of which I have endeavoured to exclude, and I hope I have excluded, every colouring epithet—it was upon combining that review of the previous divisions and debates with what I have already stated as the nature of the Motion itself, that we arrived at the conclusion, that effectual progress with the Bill—progress such as would leave the standing ground of the House of Commons relatively to the Bill sensibly different at the end of our labours for the year, from that which it had been at the beginning—such progress had become impossible; and that consequently, as between the alternatives I have named, of an endeavour to accept the judgment of the House, and adapt it to the framework of our Bill, and that other equally legitimate alternative of resignation, our duty was, in the first instance, on Tuesday last, to tender the resignation of our offices; and finally, on having the opportunity of communication, through Her Majesty's gracious kindness, with Her Majesty herself to-day, to persevere in such resignation.

Sir, I hope that, in conveying to the House the motives which acted upon our minds, I have been fortunate enough to make it understood that our sole desire is to present the subject-matter, with which I have dealt, simply as we ourselves viewed it; but that I lay down no law and imply no opinion for others, and that I am not using the matter I have stated in the way, I will not say of reproach, but even of argument. Such, then, were the considerations which weighed upon our minds. It is the duty of the members of a retiring Government, especially in circumstances of gravity, and with regard

to a measure of capital public importance, to place the House of Commons, so far as their obligations with regard to the public interests may allow them, in possession of the motives and considerations by which they have been guided. That plea, I trust, will be thought to excuse the length, at which I have detained the House.

I have no more, Sir, to add than simply this; that as we hold our offices only until our successors are appointed, I now propose to move that this House at its rising do adjourn until Thursday next; not at all with the belief that at so early a date any effectual measures will have been taken for the formation of an Administration, but rather with the idea that on Thursday there may be some person with whom we may be enabled to communicate, and at whose instance, as he will then be the proper judge of the arrangements for public business, we may on Thursday be enabled to propose a further adjournment of the House. I need hardly say that at the meeting of the House on Thursday, and, indeed, at its meeting to-day, I am not aware of any formal rule which would prevent honourable Members from proceeding with Orders, or other business, which may stand upon the Notice Paper. But I am quite sure it will be felt that any such prosecution of business would be inconvenient during the period of what is actually an abeyance of the functions of the Government; unless indeed it be business which is absolutely essential, and beyond dispute. One such exception is the Vote we propose to take to-day, in order to be able to make some necessary payments in connexion with the Packet Service. If that Vote is passed to-day, it may be reported on Thursday, and the Report will then be in time for the purposes for which it is required.

SPEECH ON MOVING THE DISCHARGE OF THE ORDER OF THE DAY FOR FURTHER PROCEEDING WITH THE BILL.

MR. W. E. GLADSTONE: Sir, in rising to move that the Orders of the day for going into Committee on these Bills be discharged, I have to say a very few words in explanation of the course that I have now finally taken with reference to them. I did not, on the resignation of the late Government, at once move that the Orders should be discharged, under the conviction, which I shared with my colleagues, that it was our duty to allow those Orders to stand until our successors had taken their places, in order that they might have an opportunity of stating either their general intentions, or any special matter connected with their views in relation to the Bills, or to the subject of Reform. But the declarations made by various leading members of the Government in another place, and likewise in the country, have satisfied us that it is not their intention to take any steps in reference to these Bills; and I beg it, Sir, to be understood, that I by no means make that circumstance a subject of complaint against them in the present state of facts. We, however, hereupon determined to propose that the Orders of the day should be discharged, and the Bills consequently dropped. But in making that proposal, I did not think it right to treat the dropping of these Bills as a matter of course; and, therefore, I gave previous notice of my intention to

move that the orders be discharged, so that any members of the House might have an opportunity of expressing their opinion as to the Bills, and as to the question whether any attempt ought to be made by the present Government to deal with them. It being now two hours past midnight, I will not long detain the House at such a period of the sitting, nor, indeed, would I have detained you, Sir, long at an earlier hour, upon this subject. I do not think that, under the circumstances in which I am placed, it would be advisable for me to attempt any further proceeding with these Bills; but, after all that has happened, it may be expected that I should say one word with respect to the future.

The great subject of the amendment of the representation of the people is not any longer primarily in my hands, nor in the hands of those with whom I had the honour to be associated. It is, of course, to her Majesty's Government; in the first instance, that the country will look for its decision with respect to this important matter. I do not press the Government upon the question; I do not make any complaint against the Government for having declined to give any definite opinion upon it immediately on their assumption of office. I shall only say with regard to our successors in office, that it will be a matter of great satisfaction to myself and my colleagues when the Government shall feel themselves in a position enabling them to deal with this question in an effectual manner. I do not ask from them, nor am I prepared to give on my own part, or upon the part of those with whom I have the honour to act, any pledge with regard to the particulars of these Bills or either of them, or with regard to any particular provisions in these or any other Bills dealing

with Parliamentary Reform. This is not a time when the matter should be so handled; but I may say thus much: we shall in the future be glad, irrespectively of all narrow and selfish considerations, to support any measure which we may deem to be at once prudent and effectual, if such a measure should be introduced by those who may be more successful than we have been in the attempt to settle a great imperial question. We shall sincerely congratulate them upon a result so happy for the country. At the same time, I also feel it my duty to say, without reflecting in any way upon those who have been opposed to us; that we shall feel bound to resist, to the utmost of our power, any illusory or reactionary measure. Beyond what I have now briefly stated, we only desire that our intentions with reference to Parliamentary Reform should be estimated from what we have already said and done during the past Session; and, whatever course we may feel called upon to take with regard to any Bill which may be introduced by the Government, we trust it may be found consistent with the spirit of our previous conduct. With these few words I beg leave, Sir, to move that the order of the day for going into Committee on the Representation of the People Bills be discharged.

APPENDIX.

No. 1.—LETTER TO THE LONDON WORKING MEN'S ASSOCIATION.

"11, Carlton-house Terrace,
"Gentlemen, July 2, 1866.

"I have the honour to acknowledge your letter of the 29th. In that letter, on behalf of the London Working Men's Association, you invite me to attend a public meeting which they propose to hold for the purpose of thanking me for what I have done, or endeavoured to do, in vindication against attacks which they term insults and calumnies, and of which I must own that it is difficult to visit them with any terms of censure more severe than they deserve.

"It is with reluctance that I decline any invitation proceeding from a portion of my fellow-subjects to whom our electoral laws, as they exist, accord less liberally than to others the regular constitutional facilities for making known their wishes, and for the representation of their interests. The force of this consideration is, however, diminished, when I recollect how well and nobly, during the recent Parliamentary struggle, the cause which I believe to be not less the cause of loyalty and of order than of freedom and of liberal policy, has been defended by the representatives of the metropolis. If there be a single

exception, it only serves to exhibit more conspicuously the general truth of my assertion.

"I am obliged to excuse myself from accepting your flattering invitation, first, because I feel that, after the labours of the last five months, prudence compels me to look for some comparative repose; and, secondly, because I am convinced that I shall best serve the cause which, in unison with my distinguished colleagues, and under our long-tried leader, I have had in hand, by confining my humble efforts in political debate as far as possible, first, to my place in the House of Commons, and, secondly, to any occasion when I meet my numerous constituents in Lancashire.

"In saying this I shall not be supposed to indicate a disposition to recede from the ground on which we have stood during the contest. I look upon the recent resignation by Lord Russell's Government of their offices as one more onward step towards the accomplishment of their object, and in the hour of defeat I have the presentiment of victory.

"By a scrupulous moderation in fixing the limits of our original design, by a careful deference to every wish of the House of Commons in regard to methods of procedure, and by an unflinching firmness in resisting every effort, direct or covert, to impair the scheme or lessen the amount of enfranchisement we had proposed, we sought to unite the conditions most likely to insure success in an undertaking marked in former years by so many miscarriages and failures. Whether our plan is finally to be added to the list of these miscarriages, remains yet to be seen. To wait with patience the course of present events, to be especially on our guard against any illusory or reactionary

measure simulating the name and character of Reform —to encourage the calm, serious, orderly, and temperate expression of opinion—seem to be the chief duties of the hour; and in discharging these duties I am persuaded we shall show we are not less (we even think we are rather more) entitled than our opponents to the character of good citizens, of true-hearted Britons, and of affectionate and loyal subjects.

"I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

"Your very faithful servant,

"W. E. GLADSTONE.

"To the President (Mr. George Potter) and
the Secretary (Mr. R. Hartwell) of the
London Working Men's Association."

No. 2.—LETTER TO MR. HUGESSEN.

"11, CARLTON-HOUSE TERRACE,
"MY DEAR HUGESSEN, July 30, 1866.

"I have received your letter, enclosing a copy of one addressed by Sir Edward Dering on the 16th of July to Lieutenant-General Williams; and, as you have asked my opinion on the case, I shall consider your request as my warrant for commenting on a matter which is, indeed, one of great public interest, but in which I have no title whatever to interfere.

"I cannot say that Sir Edward Dering's reasons for voting with Lord Dunkellin have, in my view, any weight. He says it was not proposed by Lord Dunkellin,

or by any one else, to substitute a seven-pound rating for a seven-pound rental. But I apprehend this very thing was proposed by Mr. Cave, the gentleman selected to second the motion. The mover, I think, stated his preference for a six-pound rating, which would have excluded a large number whom we had proposed to enfranchise. Sir E. Dering will recollect, that the speakers for the amendment were gentlemen opposed either to the Bill or to the Franchise clauses. He says the Government should have proposed a rating Franchise of an amount not higher than the seven-pound rental Franchise. Now, as six-pound rating would have been materially higher, he must apparently mean that we ought to have proposed a five-pound rating Franchise. But this, the next lowest figure, would have given an enfranchisement materially larger than that of the Bill. I wonder Sir E. Dering does not see that, if we had done this, we should for the first time have given colour, and even more than colour, to the charge which has from the beginning been urged against us with such persistency and such gross and palpable injustice, the charge of having disregarded the fears and scruples of the moderate, and of having leant to the doctrines of extreme politicians. What he recommends as the obvious and easy remedy for the dilemma, was, in our view, wholly inadmissible. But it is one question whether the vote, or the reasons given for it, are good; and it is another whether I, if I were an Elector of East Kent, should withhold my support from Sir E. Dering on account of it. It ought, I think, now to be the great object of all who are interested, either in the Liberal party or in the subject of Parliamentary Reform, to bring about

such an union of sentiment in the party as may obviate all risk of the repetition of the late unhappy events, and may secure a speedy and satisfactory settlement of the question. I give entire credence to any declaration proceeding from Sir E. Dering; and, examining his letter with the view I have described, I find its meaning unequivocal; especially where he says that, by proposing an equivalent enfranchisement in an altered form, we should, 'if beaten on that vital point,' have 'put ourselves in the right and our opponents in the wrong.' This proves, without entering into minute criticism, that Sir E. Dering was friendly to the substance of our measure. On that ground, without in the least degree qualifying my opinion as to that particular vote, I not only, if I were one of your brother-electors, should not vote against Sir E. Dering, but I should continue to afford him exactly the same support as if that vote had not been given. I read his letter, and accept his declarations, in the spirit of confidence, and not in the spirit of suspicion. We, the supporters of the Bill, who have had occasion to feel how the spirit of suspicion poisons the atmosphere of politics, and renders hopeless what otherwise, though difficult, was practicable enough, should, I think, set an example of discarding it, and of interpreting and treating others as we wish to be treated and interpreted ourselves.

"I remain, my dear Hugessen,

"Sincerely yours,

"W. E. GLADSTONE.

"E. H. Knatchbull-Hugessen, Esq., M.P."

No. 3.—LETTER TO MR. HORSFALL, OF MANCHESTER.

"11, CARLTON-HOUSE TERRACE,
"SIR, August 8, 1866.

"In reply to your letter of the 6th, I beg respectfully to express my desire that my views respecting reform in Parliament should be gathered from my own acts, and from my language, in which they have been amply stated. I do not agree in the demand either for manhood or for household suffrage; while I own with regret that the conduct of the opponents of the Government measure of this year has done much to encourage that demand, which, but for such opposition, would scarcely have been heard of. You are at liberty to make such use of this letter as you may think fit.

"And I remain, Sir,

"Your very humble servant,

"W. E. GLADSTONE.

"William Horsfall, Esq."

No. 4.—SPEECH ON THE BILL OF MR. BAINES, IN 1864.

ADVERTISEMENT.

In this Speech will be found the expression of an opinion that the Legislature should exclude from the franchise on two grounds only. First, it should exclude those who are, presumably, in themselves unfitted to exercise it with intelligence and integrity. Secondly, it should exclude those with respect to whom it might appear that, though no personal unfitness can be alleged against them, yet political danger might arise from their admission; as, for example, through the disturbance of the equilibrium of the constituent body, or through virtual monopoly of power in a single class.

General statements of principle, advanced in debate, if they are such as, in the view of candid minds, to require explanation, ought to find it in the context of the Speech which contains them.

Objection has been taken, and even alarm expressed, with respect to the breadth of the particular statement now in question. I cannot make any other reply than to publish it, as it was delivered, together with its context, and to leave it, subject only to equitable allowance for faults of hasty expression, to the discerning consideration of the reader.

Another objection I could more readily have conceived; namely this: that a proposition, apparently of wide scope, is reduced by large and scarcely definable exceptions within rather narrow limits. Still, the exceptions appeared along with the proposition, and formed part of it.

If, indeed, I am asked whether it was a deliberate and studied announcement, I reply that it was not: it was drawn forth on the moment by a course of argument from the opponents of the measure, which appeared to assume that

the present limitations of the franchise, disavowed as they have been by such an accumulation of authority, required no defence from their newly-risen advocates, and were to be accepted without inquiry, as in themselves, at least presumptively, good and normal. But I am aware that this circumstance, if the opinion be blameable, will afford no apology.

Further, I spoke with reference to the present, or rather indeed with a view to retrieving arrears of the past; and neither time, nor as I think reason, permitted me to attempt the solution of problems of real intricacy, which belong wholly to the future, and which are little likely to become practical except for another generation.

If I regret the manner in which my declaration has been interpreted, it is chiefly because of its tendency to produce in other quarters an exaggerated estimate; likely, when brought down to the dimensions of fact, to cause disappointment.

The question is, whether the statement be a gratuitous and startling novelty, or whether it is rather the practical revival of a strain which, five years ago, was usual and familiar; which had then derived abundant countenance from the very highest organs of political articulation, and which now only sounds strange because within that period it has fallen into desuetude.

As the opinion of an individual, the whole matter is of trifling consequence. But the consistency of parties and of Parliaments is a subject of weight and moment; for upon this depends that store of public confidence, which is of such inexorable necessity, and of such inestimable value, for the maintenance of our free and happy Government.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER: I must begin, Sir, by observing, that the speech of the honourable Gentleman opposite (Mr. Carr), in my opinion, went far beyond the scope of the motion which he has submitted to the House. For it was really a speech against all extension of the franchise in the direction of the working classes, and it did not refer merely to the subject of that particular franchise, which we have to adopt or reject in connexion with the present Bill. However, it may be said with truth, that it is not the speech in question, but the Motion of my honourable Friend on the one side and the Amendment of the honourable Member opposite on the other, with which we have principally to deal. Let us, then, consider what is the practical issue raised for our present decision.

There are two points bearing upon this question, the one a matter of fact, and the other a matter of judgment, upon which it may be reasonably supposed there will be a general concurrence of opinion. With regard to the matter of fact, there is no doubt that those, who sit on the other side, may be said to be unanimous in deprecating at the present time—and certainly, as far as the argument of the honourable Gentleman, and the reception of that argument, afforded an indication, at any time—the extension of the franchise. I do not attempt to conceal or deny, on the other hand, that the other great party in the country is not unanimous on the subject. No small number of those, who profess

liberal opinions, are indifferent, some may be even averse, to any change such as is proposed by the Bill, from a ten-pound to a six-pound franchise in towns. The second point, upon which I think all parties are agreed, is this; that at the present period, and in a state of opinion such as now subsists, it would not be advisable, I might even say it would not be justifiable, for the Government of the Queen, however it might be composed, to submit a measure on this subject to Parliament. Under these circumstances, and with these admissions freely made, the question we have before us for to-day is this: What course ought we to take on the Motion of my honourable Friend, having regard to the Amendment which has been moved in favour of postponement? My honourable Friend, without communication with the Government, and acting, as far as I am aware, entirely in the exercise of his own discretion, has brought his proposal before us as a subject for discussion. I treat this, without praise or censure, merely as a fact. And now I admit it may be said that the motion of the honourable Gentleman opposite, which is a motion for time, does, in fact, no more than embody the admissions I have myself made, namely, that this is not a period for a Government to deal with this question, and that even the party which represents the liberal opinions of the country is not unanimous on the subject. Why, then, do I vote against the honourable Gentleman's motion? It is because, even when taken apart from his speech, although much more if taken in connection with the speech, it appears to me to support, to justify, and to confirm a state of facts and opinions, which I deeply deprecate and deplore. Admitting the

existence of those opinions within the limits I have described—and it is useless to shut our eyes to their existence—I must say that I deeply deplore them. I will not go the whole length of my honourable Friend in respect to the precise terms he used as to the broken pledges of Governments and parties, but I will not scruple to admit that, at least as it appears to me, so much of our Parliamentary history during the last thirteen years—I mean during the years since the vote on Mr. Locke King's Bill in 1851—as touches Parliamentary Reform, is a most unsatisfactory chapter in that history; and has added nothing to the honour of Parliament, or to the safety and well-being of the country. Now I cannot expect any sudden change for the better as likely to arise from any debate or decision on the present Bill. Yet I am convinced that the discussion of the question in the House of Commons must, through the gentle process by which Parliamentary debates act on the public mind, gradually help to bring home the conviction that we have not been so keenly alive to our duties in this matter as we ought to have been; that it is for the interests of the country that this matter should be entertained; and that it ought, if we are wise, to be brought to an early settlement. The conditions requisite for dealing with it can only be supplied by a favourable state of the public mind; but the public mind is itself guided, and opinion modified, in no small degree, by the debates of Parliament.

One especial advantage attends to-day the discussion of this question, that, at present, at all events, it is not to be held strictly a party question. I am afraid, indeed, if I take as a criterion the cheers with which the

speech of the honourable Gentleman opposite was received, and the quarter from which they proceeded, that the time may come when this may, and will, once more become a party question. For the present, however, we may discuss it without exclusive reference to party associations; and I may take the opportunity of saying that for this reason I am glad—though for others I am not so—that my honourable Friend the Member for Salisbury has stepped into the arena on this occasion; because the circumstance enables us the more easily to find our way into the discussion of the question without the apprehension that we are irritating and exciting those passions and party sentiments, which necessarily enter into our debates when party interests are concerned, and which might help to obscure the true merits of the case. I will address myself, then, to the question actually before us, admitting again that, if I deeply deplore the state of opinion opposite, I am far from being satisfied with the state of opinion on this side of the House.

My honourable Friend the Member for Salisbury appears to think that he has made out his case when he has advanced three propositions: one of them, that nobody desires, nobody petitions for, the Bill; the next, that to propose the extension of the franchise downwards is to propose also the encouragement of bribery; and the third, that the working classes have their interests well attended to by the House of Commons as it is at present constituted. Now, Sir, I decline altogether to follow my honourable Friend into an argument upon the question whether or not the extension of the franchise downwards would really lead to the

encouragement of bribery. I would simply record my emphatic dissent from that statement. Again, with respect to the allegation that the working classes have their interests well cared for by this House, far be it from me to deny that this House has a strong feeling of sympathy with the working classes; but permit me to say that that sympathy is not the least strongly felt, and that its practical exhibition has certainly not been least remarkable, among those also who are the immediate promoters and supporters of this Bill. And next I come to the assertion that nobody desires a measure of this sort. But before otherwise dealing with this assertion, I want to know where, in a discussion such as is now before us, lies the burden of proof? Is the *onus probandi* upon those who maintain that the present state of the representation ought not to be touched, or upon those who say it ought to be amended? The honourable Member for Shoreham says the case of the British constitution, after a Bill of this sort, will be like the case of the man over whom was written the epitaph, "I was well; I would be better; here I am;". and he told us again that to venture on a change such as is presented in this Bill was to enter on a "domestic revolution." Sir, I entirely deprecate the application of language of such a kind to the present Bill. I will not now enter into the question whether the precise form of franchise, and the precise figure, which my honourable Friend has indicated, may or may not be that which upon full deliberation we ought to choose; I will not now inquire whether the franchise should be founded on ratepaying or on occupation; neither will I consider whether or not there should be a lodger's franchise; I put aside every question except the very

simple one which I take to be at issue, and on this I will endeavour not to be misunderstood. I apprehend my honourable Friend's Bill to mean (and if such be the meaning I give my cordial concurrence to the proposition), that there ought to be, not a wholesale, nor an excessive, but a sensible and considerable addition to that portion of the working classes—at present almost infinitesimal—which is in possession of the franchise.

Now, Sir, if I am asked what I mean by a "sensible and considerable addition," I reply that I mean such an addition as I think, and as we at the time contended in argument,* would have been made by the Bill which the present Government submitted to the House in 1860. Does then the *onus* of proof that there is a necessity for such a measure lie with us? Has the honourable Member wholly forgotten, or does he set wholly at nought, all the formal and solemn declarations of the years from 1851 to 1860? What, again, is the present state of the constituency, any departure

* "You have got already a borough constituency of four hundred and fifty thousand: you are going to add one hundred and fifty thousand, or at the most extravagant estimate two hundred thousand. . . . . The labouring classes might be two hundred thousand in a borough constituency of six hundred and fifty thousand: that is, they would be less than one-third of the whole borough constituency, and only in about one-half of the boroughs, or one-third part of the seats, returning members for England and Wales, would thus amount to such numbers as to act with any sensible or appreciable force. Now, Sir, is that the lion's share? and does that justify the appeals which have been made, and the lecture we have received to-night on American institutions?"—Speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the Bill for Amending the Representation of the People, May 3, 1860. Hansard, vol. 158, pp. 461, 2. The report is not a corrected one: and in the extract here given I have corrected an error by altering four hundred and ten thousand into four hundred and fifty thousand.

from which the honourable Gentleman deprecates and stigmatises as a "domestic revolution"? At present we have, speaking generally, a constituency of which between one-tenth and one-twentieth — certainly less than one-tenth—consists of working men. And what proportion does that fraction of the working classes, who are in possession of the franchise, bear to the whole body of the working classes? I apprehend I am correct in saying that those, who possess the franchise, are less than one-fiftieth of the whole number of the working classes. Is that a state of things which we cannot venture to touch or modify? Is there no choice between excluding forty-nine out of every fifty working men on the one hand, and on the other a "domestic revolution"? I contend, then, that it is on the honourable Gentleman that the burden of proof must be held principally to lie; that it is on those who say it is necessary to exclude forty-nine-fiftieths that the burden of proof rests; that it is for them to show the unworthiness, the incapacity, and the misconduct of the working classes, in order to make good their argument that no larger portion of them than this should be admitted to the suffrage. ("Oh, oh!") I am sorry to find that it is anywhere thought necessary to treat this question by what, perhaps, to use a mild phrase, I may call "inarticulate reasoning;" and I will endeavour not to provoke more of it from a certain quarter of the House than I can help. But it is an opinion which I entertain that if forty-nine-fiftieths of the working classes are to be excluded from the franchise, it is certainly with those who maintain that exclusion that it rests to show its necessity. On the other hand, my honourable Friend indicates that kind of extension of the suffrage

which would make the working classes a sensible fraction of the borough constituency; an important fraction, but still a decided minority as compared with the other portion of it. That is the proposition, which we have before us for our present consideration.

We are told that the working classes do not agitate for an extension of the franchise; but is it desirable that we should wait until they do agitate? In my opinion, agitation by the working classes, upon any political subject whatever, is a thing not to be waited for, not to be made a condition previous to any Parliamentary movement; but, on the contrary, it is a thing to be deprecated, and, if possible, anticipated and prevented by wise and provident measures. An agitation by the working classes is not like an agitation by the classes above them, the classes possessed of leisure. The agitation of the classes having leisure is easily conducted. It is not with them that every hour of time has a money value; their wives and children are not dependent on the strictly reckoned results of those hours of labour. When a working man finds himself in such a condition that he must abandon that daily labour on which he is strictly dependent for his daily bread, when he gives up the profitable application of his time, it is then that, in railway language, "the danger-signal is turned on;" for he does it only because he feels a strong necessity for action, and a distrust in the rulers who, as he thinks, have driven him to that necessity. The present state of things, I rejoice to say, does not indicate that distrust; but if we admit this as matter of fact, we must not along with the admission allege the absence of agitation on the part of the working classes as a sufficient reason why the

Parliament of England, and the public mind of England, should be indisposed to entertain the discussion of this question.

I may presume, Sir, to mention that I happen to have had a recent opportunity of obtaining some information respecting the views of the working classes on this subject. It arose incidentally; but I thought it worth attention at the time, and I still think it may be worth the attention of the House. It was in connexion with the discussions on the Government Annuities Bill, when a deputation, representing the most extensive among all the existing combinations of the working classes of Liverpool, came to me, and expressed their own sentiments and those of their fellows with respect to that Bill.

Mr. HORSFALL.—It was not a deputation from Liverpool, but from London. (Hear, hear.)

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER.—I am not aware of having said Liverpool. ("Yes, yes.") I beg pardon, then, I meant London; and I thank my honourable Friend for the correction he has supplied, as it enables me to report the views of a body of men perhaps some six or eight times larger than any corresponding body in Liverpool. After disavowing opposition to that measure, they proceeded to hold language such as this: "If there has been any suspicion or disinclination to this Bill on the part of the working classes, it is owing in a great measure to their dissatisfaction with the conduct of Parliament during recent years in reference to the extension of the suffrage." Part of my answer to them was, "If you complain of the conduct of Parliament, depend upon it the conduct of Parliament has been connected in no small degree

with the apparent inaction, and alleged indifference, of the working classes themselves with respect to the suffrage." The reply which they then returned was one which made a deep impression on my mind. They used language to the following effect: "It is true that, since the abolition of the corn-laws, we have given up political agitation; we have begun from that time to feel that we might place confidence in Parliament; that we might look to Parliament to pass beneficial measures without agitation. We were told then to abandon those habits of political action which had so much interfered with the ordinary occupations of our lives; and we have endeavoured to substitute for them the employment of our evenings in the improvement of our minds." I do not hesitate to confess that I was greatly struck by that answer. And, after hearing it, I for one am more than ever unable to turn round on the working classes and say, that it is plain they do not care for the extension of the franchise, because they do not agitate in order to obtain it.

The objection made by the honourable Gentleman opposite and by many others is, that the working classes, if admitted even in limited numbers, or at all events so as to form any considerable proportion of a constituency, will go together as a class, and wholly separate themselves from other classes. I do not wish to use harsh language, and therefore I will not say that that is a libel; but I believe it to be a statement altogether unjustified by reference to facts. It is not a fact, as I believe, that the working men, who are now invested with the franchise, act together as a class; and there is not the slightest reason to suppose that they would so act together if there were a moderate and

fair extension of the suffrage. If, indeed, we were to adopt a sudden and sweeping measure, a measure which might deserve the epithet of revolutionary; if we were to do anything which would give a monopoly of power to the working classes; if, for example, instead of adopting a measure which would raise the proportion of working men in the town constituencies to one-third, you gave the franchise to two-thirds, there would be some colour for the anticipation, and some justification for the language so lightly used; there might then be some temptation to set up class interests on the part of those, who might thus have the means of obtaining, or at least a temptation to grasp at, a monopoly of power, and it would, under these circumstances, be for us to show, if we could, that no danger would arise. But I appeal to the evidence of all who know anything of the facts, to say whether we have not seen the working classes, in places where they possessed the franchise, instead of being disposed to go together as a class, rather inclined, as a general rule, and under all ordinary circumstances, to follow their superiors, to confide in them, to trust them, and to hold them in high esteem. Their landlords in the country, their employers in the town, their neighbours, and those whose personal characters they respect—these are the men whom the working classes commonly elect to follow; and, for my part, I believe, if there is anything which will induce them to alter their conduct, and to make it their rule to band together as a class, it will be resentment at exclusion, and a sense of injustice. Whatever tends to denote them as persons open to the influence of bribery—as persons whose admission within the pale of the constitution constitutes "a domestic re-

volution,"—whatever tends to mark them as unworthy of confidence and respect, is calculated to drive them back to the use of their natural means of self-defence, and might, possibly, in times and circumstances which we can conceive, become the motive cause of an union among the working classes which would be adverse to other classes of the community.

It would, Sir, be worse than idle, after the able and luminous speech of my honourable Friend (Mr. Baines), to detain the House with the statistics of the question. But I take my stand, in the first place, on a great legislative fact; on the Reform Bill of 1832. Before 1832 —the epoch of the Reform Act—although the working-classes were not supposed to be represented in this House, yet we had among the constituencies some of an important character which were in an entirely preponderating proportion working-class constituencies. I myself was elected by a scot and lot borough, the borough of Newark. At the time that I was first returned for that borough, in December, 1832, the constituency was close upon sixteen hundred. That same constituency is now a little more than seven hundred; nor has it yet, I believe, reached its minimum; in fact, it is in progress of regular decay, until it reaches the limit fixed by the number of ten-pound houses. That borough was enfranchised in the time of Charles II., when the Crown did not fear to issue writs calling for the return, in certain cases, of members by constituencies that consisted of all inhabitants who paid scot and lot. But, since the Act of 1832, there has been a large deduction made from the number of working men in the possession of the franchise by the changes which have taken place in the condition of the boroughs called pot-walloping

boroughs, scot and lot boroughs, and by other denominations. I greatly doubt whether, even after making fair allowance for the bettered circumstances of working men, as large a proportion of the entire body hold the suffrage now as held it in December, 1832. If that is so, is it fair and proper that, in the thirty-two years which have since elapsed, a reduction should have taken place in the proportion which they bear to the rest of the constituency? Have their condition and character retrograded in a manner to justify this retrogression of numbers? Have they no claims to an extension of the suffrage? I think the facts are clear, and I think my honourable Friend has shown that a great portion of the facts are reducible to figures, and are capable of being represented in a form and with a force almost mathematical, with reference to education and to the state of the press. Let me, then, refer to one or two points which are not reducible to figures. We are told, for instance, that the working classes are given to the practice of strikes. I believe it is the experience of the employers of labour that these strikes are more and more losing the character of violence and compulsory interference with the free will of their own comrades and fellow-workmen, and are assuming that legal, and under certain circumstances legitimate, character, which they possess as the only means by which, in the last resort, labour can fairly assert itself against capital in the peaceful strife of the labour market. Let us take, too, that which in former times I believe to have been the besetting sin of labour,—the disposition of the majority not to recognise the right of the minority, and, indeed, of every single individual, to sell his labour for what he thinks fit. On behalf of the labouring classes,

I must, in passing, say that this doctrine is much harder for them to practise than for us to preach. In our condition of life and feeling, we have nothing analogous to that which the working man cannot but feel when he sees his labour being, as he thinks, undersold. Yet still it is our duty to assert in the most rigid terms, and to carry high the doctrine of the right of every labouring man, whether with or against the approval of his class, to sell his labour as high or as low as he pleases. But with respect to this point, which has certainly been in other times, and which I fear still is in certain cases, a point of weakness, I appeal to those who have experience of the working classes, whether there is not reason to believe that the progress of knowledge, and the experience of good government, and the designs of philanthropy and religion, have borne their fruit? Has not the time come when large portions, at the least, of working men admit the right of freedom of labour, as fully as it could possibly be asserted in this House?

Again, Sir, let us look for a few moments at the altered, the happily altered, relations of the working classes to the Government, the laws, the institutions, and, above all, to the throne of this country. Let us go back—it is no long period in the history of a nation—to an epoch not very many years before the passing of the Reform Bill, and consider what was the state of things at a time when many of us were unborn, and when most of us were children; I mean to the years which immediately succeeded the peace of 1815. We all know the history of those times; most of us recollect the atmosphere and the ideas, under the influence of which we were brought up. They were not ideas which belonged to the old current of English history; nor

were they in conformity with the liberal sentiments which pervaded, at its best periods, the politics of the country, and which harmonised with the spirit of the old British Constitution. They were, on the contrary, ideas referable to those lamentable excesses of the first French Revolution, which produced here a terrible reaction, and went far to establish the doctrine that the masses of every community were in permanent antagonism with the laws under which they lived, and were disposed to regard those laws, and the persons by whom the laws were made and administered, as their natural enemies. Unhappily, there are but too many indications to prove that this is no vague or imaginary description. The time, to which I now refer, was a time when deficiencies in the harvest were followed by riots, and when rioters did not hold sacred even the person of Majesty itself. In 1817, when the Prince Regent came down to open Parliament, his carriage was assailed by the populace of London: and what was the remedy provided for this state of things? Why, the remedy was sought in the suspension of the *Habeas Corpus* Act; or in the limitation of the action of the press, already restricted; or in the employment of spies and the deliberate defence of their employment, who, for the supposed security of the Government, were sent throughout the country to dog the course of private life, and to arrest persons, or to check them, in the formation of conspiracies, real or supposed. And what, let me ask, is the state of things now? With truth, Sir, it may be said that the epoch I have named, removed from us, in mere chronological reckoning, by less than half a century, is in the political sphere separated from us by a distance almost immeasurable. For now it may be

fearlessly asserted that the fixed traditional sentiment of the working man has begun to be confidence in the law, in Parliament, and even in the executive Government. Of this gratifying state of things it fell to my lot to receive a single, indeed, but a significant proof no later than yesterday. (Cries of "No, no," and laughter.) The quick-witted character of honourable Gentlemen opposite outstrips, I am afraid, the tardy movement of my observations. Let them only have a very little patience, and they will, I believe, see cause for listening to what I shall say.* I was about to proceed to say, in illustration of my argument, that only yesterday I had the satisfaction of receiving a deputation of working men from the Society of Amalgamated Engineers. That society consists of very large numbers of highly-skilled workmen, and has two hundred and sixty branches; it is a society representing the very class in which we should most be inclined to look for a spirit of even jealous independence of all direct relations with the Government. But the deputation came to state to me that the society had large balances of money open for investment, and that many of its members could not feel satisfied unless they were allowed to place their funds in the hands of the Government, by means of a modification in the rules of the Post Office Savings Banks. Now, that, I think I may say, without being liable to any expression of adverse feeling on the part of honourable Gentlemen opposite, was a very small but yet significant indication, among thousands of others, of the altered temper to which I have referred. Instead, how-

* The interruption was understood to refer to another deputation received on the same day, with reference to the subject of the departure of General Garibaldi.

ever, of uttering on the point my own opinions, I should like to use the words of the working classes themselves. In an address which, in company with my right honourable Friend the Member for Staffordshire, I heard read at a meeting which was held in the Potteries last autumn, they say, of their own spontaneous motion, uninfluenced by the action of their employers, in relation to the legislation of late years:—

"The great measures that have been passed during the last twenty years by the British Legislature have conferred incalculable blessings on the whole community, and particularly on the working classes, by unfettering the trade and commerce of the country, cheapening the essentials of our daily sustenance, placing a large proportion of the comforts and luxuries of life within our reach, and rendering the obtainment of knowledge comparatively easy among the great mass of the sons of toil."

And this is the mode in which they then proceed to describe their view of the conduct of the upper classes towards them:—

"Pardon us for alluding to the kindly conduct now so commonly evinced by the wealthier portions of the community to assist in the physical and moral improvement of the working classes. The well-being of the toiling mass is now generally admitted to be an essential to the national weal. This forms a pleasing contrast to the opinions cherished half a century ago. The humbler classes also are duly mindful of the happy change, and, without any abatement of manly independence, fully appreciate the benefits resulting therefrom, contentedly fostering a hopeful expectation of the future. May Heaven favour and promote this happy mutuality!

as we feel confident that all such kindly interchange materially contributes to the general good."

Now, such language does, in my opinion, the greatest credit to the parties from whom it proceeds. This is a point on which no difference of opinion can prevail. I think I may go a step further, and consider these statements as indicating not only the sentiments of a particular body at the particular place from which they proceeded, but the general sentiments of the best conducted and most enlightened working men of the country. It may, however, be said that such statements prove the existing state of things to be satisfactory. But surely this is no sufficient answer. Is it right, I ask, that in the face of such dispositions, the present law of almost entire exclusion should continue to prevail? Again I call upon the adversary to show cause. And I venture to say that every man who is not presumably incapacitated by some consideration of personal unfitness or of political danger is morally entitled to come within the pale of the Constitution. Of course, in giving utterance to such a proposition, I do not recede from the protest I have previously made against sudden, or violent, or excessive, or intoxicating change; but I apply it with confidence to this effect, that fitness for the franchise, when it is shown to exist—as I say it is shown to exist in the case of a select portion of the working class—is not repelled on sufficient grounds from the portals of the Constitution by the allegation that things are well as they are. I contend, moreover, that persons who have prompted the expression of such sentiments as those to which I have referred, and whom I know to have been members of the working class, are to be presumed worthy and fit to discharge the duties of

citizenship, and that to admission to the discharge of those duties they are well and justly entitled.

The present franchise, I may add, on the whole—subject, of course, to some exceptions—draws the line between the lower middle class and the upper order of the working class. As a general rule, the lower stratum of the middle class is admitted to the exercise of the franchise, while the upper stratum of the working class is excluded. That I believe to be a fair general description of the present formation of the constituencies in boroughs and towns. Is it a state of things, I would ask, recommended by clear principles of reason? Is the upper portion of the working classes inferior to the lowest portion of the middle? That is a question I should wish to be considered on both sides of the House. For my own part, it appears to me that the negative of the proposition may be held with the greatest confidence. Whenever this question comes to be discussed, with the view to an immediate issue, the conduct of the general body of the operatives of Lancashire cannot be forgotten. What are the qualities which fit a man for the exercise of a privilege such as the franchise? Self-command, self-control, respect for order, patience under suffering, confidence in the law, regard for superiors? And when, I should like to ask, were all these great qualities exhibited in a manner more signal, I would even say more illustrious, than under the profound affliction of the winter of 1862? I admit the danger of dealing with enormous masses of men; but I am now speaking only of a limited portion of the working class, and I for one cannot admit that there is that special virtue in the nature of the middle class which ought to lead to our drawing a marked distinction, a distinction

almost purporting to be one of principle, between them and a select portion of the working classes, so far as relates to the exercise of the franchise.

But, Sir, this question has received a very remarkable illustration from the experience of the last few years. So far as Lancashire is concerned, we have the most extraordinary evidence — evidence amounting almost to mathematical demonstration—of the competency of the working man to discharge those duties of retail trade and the distribution of commodities, which are commonly intrusted to the lower part of the middle class. I allude to the evidence afforded by the marvellous success in that particular county (and I hope the example of that county may not be too eagerly followed elsewhere) of the co-operative system. For my own part, I am not ashamed to say that, if twenty or ten years ago anybody had prophesied to me the success of that system, as it has recently been exhibited in Rochdale and other towns in the north—if I had been told that labouring men would so associate together with mutual advantage, to the exclusion of the retail dealer, who comes between the producer and the consumer of commodities, I should have regarded the prediction as absurd. There is, in my opinion, no greater social marvel at the present day than the manner in which these societies flourish in Lancashire, combined with a consideration of the apparent soundness of the financial basis on which they are built; for the bodies of men who have had recourse to the co-operative system have been, as it would appear, those who have stood out with the most manly resolution against the storms of adversity, who have been the last to throw themselves on the charity of their neighbours, and who have proved

themselves to be best qualified for the discharge of the duties of independent citizens. And when we have before us considerable numbers of men answering to this description, it is, I think, well worth our while to consider what is the title which they advance to the generous notice of Parliament in regard to their appeal to be admitted, in such measure as may upon consideration seem fit, to the exercise of the franchise. I, for myself, confess that I think the investigation will be far better conducted if we approach the question at an early date, in a calm frame of mind, and without having our doors besieged by crowds, or our table loaded with petitions; rather than if we postpone entering upon it until a great agitation has arisen.

And now, Sir, one word in conclusion. I believe that it has been given to us of this generation to witness, advancing as it were under our very eyes from day to day, the most blessed of all social processes; I mean the process which unites together not the interests only but the feelings of all the several classes of the community, and which throws back into the shadows of oblivion those discords by which they were kept apart from one another. I know of nothing which can contribute, in any degree comparable to that union, to the welfare of the commonwealth. It is well, Sir, that we should be suitably provided with armies, and fleets, and fortifications; it is well, too, that all these should rest upon and be sustained, as they ought to be, by a sound system of finance, and out of a revenue not wasted by a careless Parliament, or by a profligate Administration. But that which is better and more weighty still is that hearts should be bound together by a reasonable extension, at fitting times, and among selected portions of

the people, of every benefit and every privilege that can justly be conferred upon them; and, for one, I am prepared to give my support to the motion now made by my honourable Friend (Mr. Baines), because I believe and am persuaded that it will powerfully tend to that binding and blending and knitting of hearts together, and thus to the infusion of new vigour into the old, but in the best sense still young, and flourishing, and undecaying British Constitution.

THE END.

LONDON: PRINTED BY W. CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET,
AND CHARING CROSS.

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Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 15 June, 2016